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OR,

The Sharps and Sharks of New York.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "DASHING CHARLIE," "BUCK
TAYLOR'S BOYS," "PAWNEE BILL'S PLEDGE,"
"DICK DOOM'S DEATH-GRIP," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A RECOGNITION.

A MAN stood in the shadow of the entrance to a fashionable New York theater, gazing, with a strange look upon his face, at the gathering throng, rolling up to the doors in liveried coaches, or pressing in on foot.

He wore a military cloak, slouch hat, and had the appearance of a soldier or sailor.

"I ALSO SEE THE MAN I SEEK THE MURDERER OF MELTON REEVES. HOLD OUT YOUR HANDS, GIBSON!"

Suddenly he started as there stepped from a carriage a maiden of rare loveliness, attended by several gentlemen.

"What a beautiful face! Where have I met her, before?" and he thought seriously for a moment.

"I must see her again; I must recall her face from the past."

He took from his pocket a bill and looked at it longingly.

"The last two dollars I have in the world," he answered as if communing with himself as another person. "To-morrow I will have to pawn my cloak; then I will be a vagabond, penniless, homeless, friendless!" and his fine face betrayed the agony of a proud spirit.

"But I must—I will see that face again!" and he grasped the bill in his fingers convulsively. "I must follow her into the theater and find her."

He walked up to the box-office and laid down his two dollars:

"The last orchestra seat, sir, and about the best in the house," said the ticket-seller, and he handed him fifty cents change.

He had intended seeking only admission, but the party from the carriage must have gone to a box and his orchestra seat would command a good view of the boxes.

He was shown to his seat, on the right, a few rows from the front, and there, within twenty feet of him sat the woman whose face had so impressed him.

She was, indeed, very beautiful in both face and form, scarcely over nineteen, and her neck and ears sparkled with rare gems.

There were in the box with her another lady, several years her senior, and three gentlemen, all in full dress.

Suddenly her eyes fell upon the man in the orchestra seat, and he purposely averted his head.

Quick as a flash she dropped her opera-glass upon him, and said with some excitement:

"Oh, Meta! there is the gentleman who saved my life."

"Where is he, Julia?" quickly asked the other lady.

"In the fifth row from the front, the seat next to the aisle."

"He is not looking this way now."

"Ah, yes, and what a splendid-looking man!" said young Mrs. Stanwood.

"He is, indeed."

"And his name you said was—"

"Cecil Carlyle was the name on his card, but his place of residence was not given, and he told us nothing of himself, merely, when papa asked his name, handing his card, bowing and taking his leave."

"And he saved your life, Miss Harlowe, did I understand you to say?" asked Melton Reeves, one of Julia Harlowe's devoted admirers, though a recent addition to her string of beaux.

"Yes, my life and papa's."

"Indeed! and may I ask how it was, for I never heard of it before, and with such a debt of gratitude to his credit, and the dangerous-looking man that he is, I should think he would be a formidable rival," and the last words were uttered in a low tone by Melton Reeves.

"You asked how it happened that he saved my life, Mr. Reeves?"

"Yes, Miss Harlowe."

"It was on the Sound steamer that caught fire a year ago."

"Papa and I had state-rooms that were cut off by the fire, and that gentleman, enveloped in wet canvas, came through the flames, carried me to a place of safety, and going back for my father, brought him also through that terrible fire, after which he aided us into a boat, and thus we were rescued."

"He saved many other lives, too, but refused to give his name for publication, and only when slipping away from us after landing, gave his card to me."

"Papa tried in vain to find him, and now I have done so by a mere accident, and I wish you, Mr. Reeves, between the first and second acts, to kindly go to Mr. Carlyle and ask him to join us in the box."

"You will do this for me, will you not?"

Melton Reeves did not wish to do so, yet said politely:

"Oh, yes, certainly."

He could do no less, for he was Miss Harlowe's guest at the theater, and Mrs. Stanwood and her husband were also anxious to meet the gallant stranger, who but once had appeared to glance toward the box and then received a low bow from the fair lady whose life she asserted she owed to him.

When the curtain went down upon the first

act, Melton Reeves stood in the aisle by the side of the stranger.

Mr. Cecil Carlyle, I believe?"

The stranger started, arose and said:

"Yes, sir."

"Permit me to introduce myself as Melton Reeves, and to say that Miss Harlowe has sent me to escort you to her box."

The stranger hesitated, then in a constrained manner said:

"Thank you, I will go."

He accompanied his escort, the two chatting pleasantly on the way, though Melton Reeves said to Harry Stanwood, after ushering the stranger into the box:

"That was the most generous act of my life, Stanwood, for that man is a heart-winner."

"He looks it indeed," replied Stanwood, and he stepped forward and greeted Mr. Cecil Carlyle pleasantly as Julia Harlowe presented them.

"I am glad to meet you again, Mr. Carlyle, so that I may prove how we appreciate the debt of gratitude we owe you, but can never repay."

"It was unkind of you to desert us as you did, after saving our lives; but you must give me your address and papa will call on the morrow."

"Thank you, but I leave the city early in the morning."

"I am so sorry; but I shall claim you for supper to-night with us after the theater, and will take no refusal."

CHAPTER II.

A VAGABOND.

THE stranger thus met at the theater seemed content to drift with the tide, so, urged by all, returned with the party to the elegant home of the millionaire, Madison Harlowe.

Mr. Harlowe, a handsome old gentleman of fifty-five was reading in his library when the theater party returned, and went to the hallway to receive them, for his daughter was the idol of his life, and her friends always found a warm place in his heart.

Julia was a maiden of rare personal charms, with a face full of intelligence and beauty, manners that were dignified and fascinating and a form that was the perfection of grace and symmetry.

With such attractions, added to the fact that she was the heiress to millions, it was not to be wondered at that she was a reigning belle, and had been since, a year and a half before, she had returned from Europe, where she had spent several years in traveling under a gentleman and his wife who had been her tutor and governess.

With her father, after her return, she had passed a year in traveling through the United States, and it was while upon a Sound steamer, which had taken fire at night, she had so nearly lost her life, and, but for the rescue by Cecil Carlyle, both her father and herself would have perished.

The modest manner in which he had eluded thanks, keeping his identity unknown, had but made the father and daughter the more anxious to find their brave deliverer, and now that, by an accident, they had done so, he was certainly a most welcome guest.

He cast a quick, searching glance about him at the grandeur of the spacious parlors, library halls and dining-room, as he was ushered in to supper, noted the two servants in livery, the massive solid silver plate upon the table, and muttered to himself:

"A vagabond a guest in a palace—how passing strange!"

Mr. Harlowe had received him with the greatest warmth, while there was a quiver in his voice as he said:

"We can never thank you, Mr. Carlyle, never, never!"

"See! I still bear the scars of that fiery furnace you bore me through, and God only knows how you escaped being burned to death, for I remember your hands were blistered, and your beard burned almost to a crisp."

"It was but a temporary suffering, sir, and I do not even now bear the scars that you do," said Mr. Carlyle, glancing at the scarred hands of Mr. Harlowe.

Of course with such a record, and a tall, elegant-looking man, with dark, fascinating face and courtly manners, Mr. Carlyle was the hero that night, and when at last he took his leave, left a most favorable impression behind him.

But then it was, after the door closed upon him and her other guests, that Julia remembered that they had not discovered where Mr. Carlyle was stopping in the city, how long he had been there, where he was going, where he lived, or in fact anything whatever about him.

He had promised to call again when passing through the city, and that was all.

He had declined to be driven to his hotel, and had gone out to find it storming.

"My God! what a contrast!"

"Out into the storm and cold, from that lovely scene."

"The guest of a millionaire, and yet with but fifty cents in my pocket, and not enough property in the wide world to pawn for half a hundred dollars."

"Ha! ha! ha! what a situation for a novelist!"

"A pauper in a palace, and received with the warmest of welcomes by both the millionaire and his beautiful daughter."

"Call again," she said.

"Oh, yes, I will call again, and again, for this night is the turning point of my life, and I shall play my cards to win, for I cannot afford to lose."

"The past must be forgotten now, the future is all my own."

He strolled along through the driving sleet, his cloak drawn close around his form to keep out the cold.

Thus he wandered from street to street until suddenly he halted in the fashionable part of the city known as Murray Hill.

"The night is going and I have not where to lay my head, and only a few cents to buy breakfast with."

"And then?"

"Last night I had almost thought I would end all by a leap into the river."

"But to-night I am full of hope, for there is a beacon light ahead and I will not despair."

"I will seek one who, in spite of his vow, shall give me money."

"But how am I to reach him, so far, very far away, while I have no money?"

"I will, I must find a way; I will not now be downed—now, upon the very threshold of success."

"Not I."

He strolled on once more until turning a corner the fierce wind cut him to the bone with cold, and he shrunk for shelter against the lee of a large tree.

It was a breaking-up storm of a long and hard winter, on the very eve of spring, for it was late in March; but for that reason, on account of the temperate breezes of the past few days, the cold seemed more severe, and the way-farer clung close to the tree, his eyes watching the flickering lights.

"My God! I believe I am freezing. Not a soul is out this fearful night, save I—a vagabond—a man without a home. Not even the watchmen dare leave their cozy retreats."

"What would the beautiful Julia Harlowe say now did she see Cecil Carlyle, her rescuer?"

"By Heaven! I believe she has it in her to help me, for she is no society butterfly, as heartless as beautiful."

"I must move on, or I will perish with cold—Ah! some one is out, for there comes a form through the driving storm."

One moment after the lamplights revealed a struggle in the snow, a fall: a cry rung out like a dying utterance, and while one man lay prostrate upon the snowy bed the other fled like a deer from the scene where a tragedy had been enacted.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

A GROUP of officers were gathered in the private office of the chief of police, on the morning after the scene at the theater, where Miss Harlowe had recognized the rescuer of her father and herself.

The chief sat there with a face that looked disturbed, and was listening to the report of his men upon a mysterious murder which had been committed under the shadows of the night, and during the snow-storm.

Each officer had told his story of how he had been called to the scene about dawn by Patrolman Michael Kane, who had been going on his rounds and discovered in the snow, almost knee-deep, something that looked like a human form.

He had brushed away the snow and discovered that it was a man enveloped in storm-coat and cap, but apparently stone dead.

In the whistling storm his call was unheard, and supposing that the man had fallen from cold, he raised the form in his strong arms and hastened several blocks to a drug-store, where he aroused the clerk.

A glance at the form there showed a deep knife-thrust in the neck, and thus revealed the terrible fact that the man had been murdered.

Leaving the body there with the trembling

clerk, Michael Kane had hastened away for assistance, which he soon obtained. Then the dead man was recognized, for one of the officers had said:

"It is Mr. Melton Reeves, that rich young fellow from New Orleans who was so attentive to old millionaire Harlowe's daughter."

"He was evidently just away from his club and going to his rooms a square beyond, when he was assassinated."

The identity of the murdered man having been established, the next thing was to find the murderer.

As the one who discovered the body, Officer Kane went back to the scene of the tragedy.

It was just getting dawn, and, as it had stopped snowing, his eyes fell upon a large roll of money, half-hidden in the snow.

This he carefully put away in his breast pocket, gazed at the scene, saw the tracks in the snow, and then went to the station to make his report, after which he turned in for a short rest.

Having heard the reports of all who had been called to the aid of Officer Kane, the chief of police was awaiting the coming of that person to listen to his report.

A moment after Officer Michael Kane entered, a tall man, for he was over six feet by several inches, possessing a splendid physique, and an intelligent, determined face, which nothing could ruffle.

He saluted his chief, nodded to his brother officers, and took his position ready to be questioned.

"Officer Kane, you make the rounds four times, I believe, during the hours you are on duty?" said the chief.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you make the four rounds last night?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"I made three rounds, sir, and it was then nearly time to go off, as I found it slow pulling through the deep snow."

"I had just begun my fourth round, when I found a dead man on me beat."

"Well?"

"As I could not get my signal answered, for the storm was making such a racket, sir, I shouldered the man and carried him to the nearest drug-store, hoping to thaw him out."

"I then found that he was dead, and had been murdered."

"How?"

"There was a knife-thrust in his throat, sir."

"Well?"

"I called help, and the officers now here reported promptly, when one of them recognized the body as that of Mr. Melton Reeves, a young man from New Orleans, who has been very devoted to Miss Harlowe, and who is a member of the Quid Nunc Club."

"That being known he was taken to his rooms, his servant opening the door for us, and the coroner sent for."

"And then?"

"I went to view the spot, sir, of the murder, before it was tracked over."

"Had any one been there?"

"No, sir, the tracks of Mr. Reeves, and the one who had followed him, and the latter's foot-marks back the way he had come, with my own, were all that were visible."

"Was there a sign of a struggle?"

"Yes, sir, the murder occurred just where there was a large tree, the wind having blown the snow from about it upon the lee side."

"There was a faint indication of tracks coming this way, but the snow had nearly obliterated them."

"Then what is your theory, Kane?"

"That Mr. Reeves had left his club, sir, and been followed to the spot where he was murdered."

"The blow was struck from the side, the assassin coming up behind, not having been heard in the storm."

"There was a slight struggle for life on the part of Mr. Reeves, who could not have had strength to resist after being wounded."

"Then the murderer seized his pocketbook and fled, leaving his watch, chain, ring and diamond studs, for Mr. Reeves was in full dress, but not discovering this roll of money which I found in the snow when I went back there," and Kane handed over the roll of bills.

"Ah! this the murderer failed to get, and no doubt this roll of money was what the assassin sought; but you say he got a pocketbook?"

"I so believe, sir, as his vest was torn open, and the inner pocket ripped, as though something like a wallet had been taken from it."

"And there are just three thousand dollars in this roll of bills," remarked the chief.

"Yes, sir, I counted them."

"And which way did the murderer escape?"

"Back in the steps he had come, sir, for I traced him to Sixth avenue, where the car stables had their sweepers out on the tracks, and he went where the snow was broken, so could be followed no further."

"All right, Officer Kane; come with me to visit the scene," and turning to his clerk, the chief added:

"I wish six of the best detectives in the service to meet me here at twelve o'clock sharp. Here are their names."

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRACK.

THE chief and Officer Kane did not go in their uniforms to investigate the mysterious murder, but changing to civilian suits, they entered a carriage and were driven to the Quid Nunc Club.

An early gathering of members was already there, discussing the sad affair, as word had been sent around to a number of them, for the news had not yet been spread broadcast through the papers.

The chief was recognized by several of the members, and he asked to be shown to a private room and to meet those who had last seen Mr. Reeves, as well as the servant who had let him out of the door when he departed.

From the members he conversed with, he learned that Melton Reeves had come to the club-room after midnight, driven there in the Harlowe carriage, he having attended the theater with Miss Harlowe.

He had been joined by certain members of the club in a game of cards, and he had won rapidly quite a large sum.

"Do you know the amount?" asked the chief.

"Just three thousand dollars," was the answer.

The chief smiled and listened attentively while the servant told the hour when Mr. Reeves had started home, and that there being no cab out he would have a rough walk to his rooms.

"Did you see any one outside awaiting him?" the chief asked.

"No one, sir."

"Could any one have known of his having this money, and have dogged his steps?"

"I think not, sir."

"Did he go home alone?"

"From here he did, sir."

"Who next followed him out?"

The members all looked at each other and then at the servant, who replied:

"Well, sir, the one who went out after Mr. Reeves was a young man who had once been a member, but had been voted out unanimously on account of his actions."

"Who was he?"

"Mr. Valentine Gibson, sir."

"What was he doing here, if not a member?"

"He came and asked to see Mr. Reeves, and wanted me to call him into the hall for him; but just then Mr. Reeves came out and Mr. Gibson asked him to lend him some money."

"Well?"

"Mr. Reeves did give him some, I do not know how much, and putting on his heavy coat and cap, went out with a pleasant good-night to me."

"Then I noticed that Mr. Gibson was standing by the register in the alcove and I told him that I must ask him to leave."

"And he did so?"

"Yes, sir, at once."

"How long was this after Mr. Reeves left?"

"Two or three minutes, sir."

"Did Mr. Reeves hand him the money from the roll he carried, and had won last night?"

"No sir, he took it out from where it was thrust in the breast of his dress coat, but merely to get at his leather case, from which he took the money he gave Mr. Gibson."

"Where did he keep this leather book?"

"In his vest pocket, I think, sir."

"And the roll of bills?"

"He gave them to me to hold, sir, while he put on his great-coat, and then thrust them loosely into the flaps somewhere, as though he did not care much if he lost the money."

"You, gentlemen, remember that Mr. Reeves carried a leather pocketbook?"

Several of the members thus appealed to recalled the fact and described the book.

Thanking them, the chief and officer Kane took their leave and were driven to the house of Millionaire Harlowe.

Mr. Harlowe was absent, but Julia, when asked for, glided into the parlor looking very lovely in a morning dress.

"Miss Harlowe, I have come to acquaint you with a very sad occurrence, and—"

"My father?" gasped Julia her face paling.

"Is safe and well, as far as I know; but it is of a guest of yours last night that I have to speak, and who has met with a tragic and sudden end."

"Mr. Carlyle?" came in a low tone from the lips of Julia Harlowe, and she slipped into a chair as though from weakness.

"No, the gentleman to whom I refer was Mr. Melton Reeves."

"Tell me what has happened, I beg of you, sir?"

"Mr. Reeves was murdered last night on his way home from his club, and found dead on the pavement by Officer Kane here just before dawn this morning."

"Murdered? Poor Mr. Reeves was murdered?"

"This is indeed a shock, for last night he left here so little dreaming of a fate so terrible."

"It was sad indeed, Miss Harlowe, for he seemed to be a very popular young man; but I have called to ask you, as, pardon me, it was hinted to me that he was perhaps engaged to you, if you knew of any foe that he had?"

"You have been misinformed, sir, for Mr. Reeves was simply a friend whom I respected and admired very much."

"But to answer your question I will say that I never heard of his having a foe in the world, and yet—" she added quickly, "I do recall that he told me there was one who, but for him, would have gotten a fortune left to him, Melton Reeves, and he had threatened some day to have his revenge."

"This is valuable information, Miss Harlowe."

"Now, may I ask, if you ever heard the name of this man?"

"He was a cousin of Mr. Reeves, and his name is Valentine Gibson, once a society man about town, but who, I believe, left the city some time ago, having run through with his credit, his honor and friends."

"Thank you, Miss Harlowe, and permit me to say that this same man left the club last night immediately behind Mr. Reeves."

"That is what you would call in law circumstantial evidence that he was the murderer, is it not?"

"Yes, Miss Harlowe, and strong enough to hang him," was the stern rejoinder of the chief, who now arose and left the mansion with Officer Kane.

The carriage then took them by the scene of the tragedy, and back to Headquarters, where the chief found the six detectives awaiting him.

His orders to them were short and to the point:

"Find Valentine Gibson and bring him here."

CHAPTER V.

DICK DOOM.

THE papers came out teeming with the foul and mysterious murder of the handsome young clubman, Melton Reeves.

A man of wealth, with an elegant plantation home upon the coast country of the Mississippi, above New Orleans, he had met Julia Harlowe in society in the Crescent City, and falling in love with her, had followed her to her Northern home, making his residence in New York, where he had the *entree* everywhere.

He had never yet asked the lovely girl for her love, though he had told her father he sought to win her hand; but he would not commit himself until he felt assured that she loved him.

And such had been his untimely end.

Of course the chief had given no clew to his belief as to who the murderer was, and hence the whole affair was enveloped in deepest mystery.

In the morning papers, inserted for a month, came the reward from the Quid Nunc Club, offering five thousand dollars for the capture of the murderer, and the next day a number of wealthy residents of Murray Hill, whose sacred precincts had thus been invaded by crime, came out with the offer of a reward equally as liberal.

The city authorities were prevailed to also offer a third reward, while from Melton Reeves's attorney in New Orleans came a fourth reward to be advertised, until the one who could discover the murderer would find himself the possessor of a very handsome sum of money.

The murdered man was taken South to be placed in the burying-ground of his ancestors, and a number of his friends went along with the body to its last resting-place.

Thus two weeks went by and no word had

come of the discovery of the murderer, nor had the detectives sent out by the chief of police been able to find their man.

So as many more were set upon his track, and after two weeks some thirty Secret Service men were working day and night to solve the mystery of the murder.

Another week went by without result, when the papers came out one morning with the following:

"TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS

will be paid to any one who furnishes information which will lead to the discovery and capture of the murderer of Melton Reeves on the night of March 2d, 18—, in this city.

"Apply to MADISON HARLOWE,
"No. — —th Ave., New York."

A young man seated at breakfast in an uptown restaurant read this reward, and said to himself:

"This makes thirty thousand dollars offered for the discovery of that murderer, and yet no officers of the police, or of the Secret Service, has been able to win it.

"I shall wait just one week, and if the murderer is not discovered in that time, I will take a hand in the game, for thirty thousand is a handsome sum to earn, even though it be blood-money.

"But then there is the old law of the ancients that 'He who sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed,' and that makes all things even.

"Yes, I shall wait just one week, and then take a hand in the affair, if the murderer has not been found."

And just one week after, the young man who had thus mused upon the mysterious case presented himself at the quarters of the chief of police and asked to see that important personage.

"Your name, please?" said the officer on duty.

"Here is my card."

The officer glanced at the card and read, as he walked toward the inner office:

"DICK DOOM."

"What a name," muttered the officer, and he handed it to the chief, who was busy with his letters.

But there was something in the name that caught the chief, and he said curtly:

"Admit him."

It was with some interest that the chief looked up to behold his visitor.

He saw a young man of perhaps twenty, with a dark, handsome face, of calm but determined expression.

He was hardly over the medium height, possessed a slender form, yet one of an athlete. He was neatly dressed, in a gray suit, slouch hat and well-polished boots, while he wore gloves, carried a cane and wore gold-rimmed spectacles, with the glasses having just the suggestion of a dark tint.

His hair was black and curled about his neck, and, altogether, he was a very attractive personage in appearance, while his voice was low and pleasing as he spoke to the chief and said:

"My card introduced me, sir."

"Simply by name, and that is assumed," and the chief eyed him fixedly.

"You are a close reader, sir, as a man in your position should be.

"But, what's a name after all?"

"Much, if a man is hiding his own under an alias."

"That is just what I am doing, chief, and as my name will not interest you, let me be known to you as simply Dick Doom."

"Well, Mr. Dick Doom, what is your business with me?" asked the chief, more and more interested in his visitor.

"To ask, sir, if any of your officers, or Secret Service men have yet won the handsome rewards offered for the capture of the murderer of Mr. Melton Reeves?"

"No, sir, no clew has been yet found of the murderer."

"May I also ask if you have any one under suspicion?"

"I have."

"Will you tell me who it is?"

"I will not."

"I am sorry, for I might help you."

"Have you any suspicion who the murderer may be?"

"Not the slightest."

"Then how can you help me?"

"Placed in possession of the facts of the case I might be able to ferret out the mystery."

"You will have to ferret out the mystery alone then, Mr. Richard Doom."

"Beg pardon, sir, but I do not aspire to the

dignified name of Richard, my name being simply Dick Doom."

"See here, who are you?"

"A ferret," was the prompt response of Dick Doom.

CHAPTER VI.

A FERRET.

"Ah! you are a ferret then?" and the chief turned a still more curious look upon his visitor.

"Yes, sir."

"In other words, you are a detective?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sit down, Mr. Doom."

The ferret did so.

"Now, to what detective agency do you belong, for I confess I never heard of you before?"

"I do not wonder at that, sir, for I belong to no detective agency."

"Indeed?"

"Can it be that you are a Secret Service man on your own hook?"

"Just that, sir; I play a lone hand."

"Then I hardly feel that I can confide in you, as alone you are not responsible, you know, and I am sorry to say so, for somehow I believe there is stuff in you."

"Perhaps a guarantee should be given, sir, so suppose you look over your books and see if there is not a reward uncalled for, for information sent you as to where the murderer, Mad Riley could be found."

"Ah! the man was hanged some months ago."

"Yes, sir, and found on information furnished you by letter signed D. D."

"Look over your letter files marked secret correspondence, and see, please; you will find the letter in the third case in that row."

"You seem well posted, indeed, in my affairs."

"Do not be angry, for I saw you read the letter, taking it from that case."

"Ha! I never read it to but one person."

"A woman, eh?"

"Yes."

"That was my day to wear petticoats, and I came in answer to your letter to tell you where Mad Riley could be found."

"You set your shadowers on me, but I am what you might call a lightning change artist in the theaters, and after doubling a corner, changed to an old man and met your detective face to face, and of course he did not know me."

"Mr. Dick Doom, I am proud to know you."

"Thank you, sir; but as to the guarantee?"

"There is a reward here for you yet uncalled for, if you are the man who sent that letter which led to Riley's capture."

"As proof I can duplicate the writing on the letter without seeing it; but I do not care for the money now, so bank it for me, please, to draw interest, and meanwhile let me say that you found the diamonds of Miss Ida Sollee, the actress, for in the garb of an officer, you may recall, I brought the prisoner here one night, gave him over to an officer, with the diamonds and a written statement of the facts of the theft and how I caught him."

"I stated to the officer that I would return the next day, but I had no intention of doing so, for I cared not to be known; but examine my written statement regarding the prisoner, and you will find it in the same writing as my letter about Mad Riley, and instead of my D. D. at the end of it you will find a skeleton form, the throat of which is in the grip of a hand of flesh, signifying another name I bear as Death Grip."

"See?"

"Yes, I do see, that you are a very remarkable personage, Dick Doom, and there is an uncalled-for reward here for you now, which was offered for those diamonds of Miss Ida Sollee."

"Bank that reward, also, with Mad Riley's blood-money for me, please," was Dick Doom's cool request to the chief of police.

"I'll do it; and let me say that I need no further guarantee of your good faith and ability, so will trust you, Mr. Dick Doom, and there is my hand on it."

"Thank you, sir; I shall be proud of your confidence, and as you have trusted me without a guarantee other than my word, let me ask you to read this," and taking from his pocket a paper, he handed it to the chief, who read it carefully through and then said:

"This certainly gives you a most flattering introduction and recommendation from the chief of police of New Orleans, for it states that though you are not allied to his Secret Service League, or any other, you can be trusted under all circumstances to the end of the chapter."

"I hope you will find it so, sir; but I am going to ask a favor of you, chief?"

"Well?"

"That you keep my secret as to who I am, for I won my name of Dick Doom the Death-Grip Detective from the New Orleans chief who knew that I was sure to catch the men I started for and bring them to justice, and in many cases they were men of the Mafia."

"Now, I am working on a hobby of my own, a trail I am determined to track to the end, and in doing this I come across all phases of crime and criminals, and thus render good service though I never earn blood-money without some degree of repugnance."

"Not to one of your officers, or to a man in the Secret Service Leagues of New York am I known as you see me to-day; and yet I know every one on your force by sight and name, am acquainted with all the detectives, and assure you that not one of them could track me to my abiding place, or could tell me as I am."

"And thus, chief, I desire to remain for reasons of my own."

"I shall keep your secret, Mr. Doom, as you request."

"Thank you, sir; but now to the murderer of Mr. Reeves?"

"Have you a clew?"

"I have not."

"Have you a theory?"

"I have all the newspaper accounts, sir, that is all."

"And you think you can find the murderer?"

"I can try, sir."

"Well, my belief is that he was dogged from the Quid Nunc by an ex-club member, who had visited him there that night and gotten money from him."

"Do you know his name?"

"Yes, Valentine Gibson— Ha!"

Dick Doom had suddenly sprung to his feet at hearing the name, but as quickly said:

"Thank you, I will write it down."

"Good-morning, sir."

The chief bowed and Dick Doom left the room.

Instantly the chief stepped to a door near and called:

"Ferret Frank."

"Yes, sir."

"Follow the man who just passed out and report all you can about him."

CHAPTER VII.

FERRET FRANK'S REPORT.

THE chief of police had been much impressed with his strange visitor.

He had discovered in him a certain reserve force, a self-confidence that was very sure to win.

At times his manner arose to impressiveness, again he was light and airy and then sarcastic, but always decided.

And all the time he spoke in that low, musical voice that was very winning.

"Well, he is a mystery in himself, this Mr. Dick Doom," muttered the chief when he was again alone.

"He is on a trail of his own, and meanwhile helps justice as he goes along."

"He is beyond finding out, for I could not read him any more than I could a Chinese Laundry bill."

"But there was one thing caught him off his guard, and that was when I told him the name of the man I suspected of the murder of Melton Reeves."

"He did start and his lips were compressed; but in a second he was serene as a June day, and yet he showed that he knew the man, or had heard of him."

"Now, to see if he will find him."

"If he does he will get thirty thousand dollars in cash, and I now hold for him two rewards of five thousand each, and yet the fellow does not seem to need money."

"The chief at New Orleans said to trust him as I would myself, and that is a strong recommendation."

"I shall keep his secret, as I promised, but Ferret Frank will give me some points that will help me, for I do not wish to act wholly in the dark."

"Ferret Frank has never yet failed me on any case, so he will find out what I wish to know regarding this Mr. Dick Doom."

So mused the chief, as he glanced over his letters, his mind running upon the strange Secret Service man rather than upon the business before him just then.

But Ferret Frank did not return that day, and when the chief entered his office the next morning the first thing he asked was for the detective.

"Not reported yet, sir," was the answer.

A frown crossed the chief's brow. He began to feel anxious about the man whom he had had most reason to rely upon for Secret Service work.

"If he does not show up by ten I will send searchers out for him—ah! here he is now," and Ferret Frank entered the room.

Seeing that he was safe the chief coolly went on with his work, and only after several minutes said:

"Well, Ferret Frank, what of my man?"

Before the detective could make reply an old woman entered the room, her voice raised to a high pitch.

"I'm glad to see yer, cap'n, 'deed I am, for I has heard my son Bennie speak of you so often and often."

"I'm deaf, don't yer know, so yer must talk ter me through this ear-trumpet—there! now, what did yer say, cap'n?"

"I asked you who Bennie was, and what I could do for you, madam?" said the polite chief, speaking loudly through the ear-trumpet.

"Lord sakes! you nearly split my drum, cap'n, talking so loud."

"When yer talks through a trumpet yer mustn't talk so loud."

"I beg pardon, madam, but—"

"Louder, please, for you is whispering now."

The chief had still spoken in a loud tone, but raised his voice and said:

"Who is your son, Bennie, madam, that speaks of me so often?"

"Lord sakes! don't know Bennie Lathrop, one o' yer capt'ins o' perlice?"

"He told me ter come right here, if I missed him at ther boat, and wait for him."

"Didn't yer know he was a-specting me?"

"Oh, yes, madam, and I am glad to welcome you in his stead."

"He will soon be here, as he has missed you, so sit right over there and wait for him, and soon as I transact some business with this gentleman I will entertain you."

The chief led the old lady to an easy-chair, and she sat down and became at once interested in the pictures on the wall, while the chief, turning to the detective, said:

"Now, Ferret Frank, I'll hear your report, for the old lady is deaf as a post, and she's Captain Lathrop's mother, so will wait for him here."

"Well, chief, please tell me who that was you sent me on the track of yesterday."

"That is what I wished you to find out."

"Well, I didn't do it, sir."

"Why?"

"He was the most Will-o'-the-wisp to track I ever tackled."

"How so?"

"Well, sir, he went from here to a restaurant and had some breakfast, as I also did to watch him."

"Then he walked up to Union Square and got into a cab."

"I took another and followed."

"It led me a merry chase and at last drew up at the Harlem station and out got a young lady."

"You had followed the wrong cab?"

"I didn't think so, sir, so concluded to follow the girl."

"She took the train back to Forty-second street, got out there and went to the Grand Union Hotel, and I felt I was wrong, for I saw that she had a valise, and the man had not."

"She registered as 'Miss Richards, New Haven,' and I secured a room next to her."

"In the night, thinking she had retired, I was about to come and report, when a knock came at my door, a stranger entered, and would you believe it, chief, he held me up, bound me and robbed me."

"I was released by the clerk this morning, and was told that Miss Richards had left at midnight."

"That's all I know, sir, so you see I made a mess of it."

"All right, Ferret Frank, better luck next time; now I will entertain Ben's mother," and he turned to the old lady as the detective left the room.

"Let me give you Ferret Frank's things I took from him last night, chief," came in low tones from the supposed old woman and the chief recognized now the voice of Dick Doom.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUTWITTED.

At first the chief was inclined to be angry, when he recognized in "Cap'n Bennie's mother" none other than Dick Doom.

But he smoothed his ruffled brow and laughed, as he said:

"Well, Dick Doom, you have done me completely."

"I did not wish to impose upon you, but I am glad to have been able to show you how easily you can be deceived."

"I am glad that I witnessed it with my own eyes or I would not have believed it," said the chief with a smile.

"I told you, sir, that I knew your officers and men, and happening to know that your friend Captain Lathrop was expecting his old mother to visit him, I discovered that the boat she was coming on was a couple of hours late, so I decided to impersonate the old lady and reach here when Ferret Frank did."

"Then you were the supposed girl he followed?"

"Oh, yes, sir, for I knew he was shadowing me the moment I left, and that you had sent him."

"But the change you made?"

"It was easily done, sir, for, as I told you I was a change artist."

"But, I knew you looked upon Ferret Frank as one of your best men, if not the best, and I was aware of his skill and courage."

"Still I determined to rope him in, and in the disguise of a clergyman I entered his room, held him at bay with my revolver, put the bracelets upon him and a gag in his mouth."

"Then I robbed him, and here is his watch, chain and money, sir."

"You are indeed a wonder, Dick Doom, for that man is a giant in strength."

"The battle is not always to the strong, sir, nor the race to the swift; but I must not delay here as Captain Lathrop may come in with his real mother."

"Tell me, what about the man you were to seek?"

"As you had a detective on my track, sir, I had to throw him off, so could not capture Valentine Gibson."

"You think you can do so?"

"I know it, sir."

"You are very confident."

"I will bring your man here to-morrow, sir."

"You mean it?"

"I never break a promise, chief, to friend or foe."

"I believe you, and—but pardon me one moment, while I dispatch some men on certain work."

The chief crossed to the outer door, turned from the hall into the waiting-room of men on duty, and called Ferret Frank to him.

"Get two of your best men and follow the old woman now in my office."

"Don't disguise and lose no time, for I can detain her but a short while."

"Captain Lathrop's mother, sir?" asked Ferret Frank in surprise.

"Yes," and the chief returned to his room.

Whether or not he knew that he could have been seen, had he moved, as when the chief left any one alone in his room, there was a watch who at once stepped to an eye-hole commanding a view of any part of it, Dick Doom did not move from his chair, and when the chief returned was as demure as a real old lady would have been.

After a few minutes' longer conversation with the chief, Dick Doom took his leave, going out as he had entered, impersonating Captain Lathrop's mother.

The detectives were already on the watch outside for him, and yet he seemed not to suspect their presence.

Hardly had he been gone five minutes when Captain Lathrop drove up to the door, with his mother in the carriage with him.

"Your mother has been here, captain, and left five minutes ago," said the officer on duty at the door.

"My mother is here with me now, Burns."

"Not that lady, sir?"

"Yes, that lady, though she is young-looking to have a son like me."

"Why, that isn't the one that was here, sir."

Captain Lathrop wanted an explanation, and was told how his mother had arrived and waited in the chief's room.

In he went, and the chief said quickly:

"How many mothers have you, Ben?"

"One is all I claim."

"Well, one old lady, deaf as a post, was here to claim you, but she has gone."

"Chief, what does this mean?"

"Simply that an old woman played it on me as cunning as a fox, pretending to be deaf, and overheard a conversation between Ferret Frank and myself."

"She has just left."

"Can't you catch her?"

"I have three detectives on her track."

"Good! but I hope she heard nothing of importance."

"Fortunately, no; but I will go out to the carriage and meet your other mother, Ben," and the chief smiled.

"And what is your opinion regarding the bogus one, chief?"

"That she is a very clever man, Ben," was the reply.

The chief had a pleasant chat with the mother of his favorite captain, and then returned to his room.

"Several hours after, Ferret Frank put in an appearance, and the chief looked up from his work and said simply:

"Well?"

"She threw me, sir."

"Indeed, and how?"

"She went into the ladies' entrance of the Grand Central Hotel, gave the man on duty there a card and a dollar, and when he left, locked the door and skipped up-stairs."

"I ran around through the main entrance, where I had sent my two men, and we went up-stairs in search of her."

"She was not to be found, and the man at the door said she had given him a card to hand personally to General Cole, and no such man is in the hotel."

"He could not tell us how she escaped."

"Did you look in the parlor?"

"Yes, sir, but there was only a pretty young lady there."

The chief smiled and said:

"You should have followed the young lady, Ferret Frank."

"The old lady outwitted you."

CHAPTER IX.

VALENTINE GIBSON.

On the top floor of an humble residence upon Brooklyn Heights, was a cheery, large room, overlooking a vast expanse of territory, and with a busy scene of city and river in full view.

The room held a single occupant, and he was standing by the window apparently enjoying the scene.

He was in dressing-gown, smoking-cap and slippers, and had the appearance of one reared in refinement, though his face was stamped with dissipation and he wore a baggared look, as though recovering from an attack of illness.

There were books upon shelves, a guitar lying on the sofa, a pair of foils and mask hanging on the wall, some writing materials upon the table, and a few unfinished sketches from the scene upon the river, with its steamers and sailing vessels flying about.

A pair of boxing-gloves, with dumb-bells and Indian clubs were in a corner, showing a sporting and athletic taste in the occupant of the room.

But for all these, his guitar, foils and sketching, he seemed to be filled with dissatisfaction at his lot.

"Curses! how much longer will this last?"

"I suppose until I grow long hair and beard to disguise me, so that I can get out of this infernal roost."

"But the days drag along, the nights are terrible, and when I think it may be weeks before I dare leave I almost become crazed."

"I know that I am suspected, though there has not been a single reference in the papers regarding me."

"Not a line about my going to the club and leaving after he did."

"But this very silence about me proves that the police suspect me and are watching for me, so I dare not venture out until all blows over and a beard and long hair will disguise me."

"Fortunately, the clergyman's suit I wore at that last masquerade I attended will disguise me."

"And then, how fortunate I was to engage this room the very day of—the murder."

He started as he heard a step on the stairs, and then continued:

"The old lady and her daughter are kind to me, and as I pay them a big price will be glad to keep me here, for there are no houses opposite with prying people in the windows, and here I am safe—Come in!"

A young girl entered at the call, a comely maiden, who said:

"The evening papers, sir, and all of them, as you requested; but it's a big sum for you to pay for all the morning and afternoon papers, for they are all alike."

"Yes, but I enjoy them."

"I hope you are better, sir?"

"Yes, I am steadily improving, and suppose will be able to go home in a couple of weeks, or

a month at furthest, and you and your mother will doubtless be delighted to get rid of me."

"No, indeed, Mr. Gibson; we will be sorry, for we wish you were a steady boarder, as you have not been any trouble and pay us so well."

"Well, within a month I will be able to go, but if I leave before will pay you for the whole time."

"And what will you have for supper, sir?"

"Anything you choose to bring me; but have you other boarders?"

"No, sir; we only rent this room to help along, for it just keeps us even, you know," and depositing the papers on the table the landlady's daughter left the room, more than ever pleased with their handsome boarder.

Supper was brought up soon after nightfall, and the boarder was still conning over the afternoon papers, for he had all of them that were issued, as also all the New York dailies each morning.

He ate sparingly of his supper, then turned to his papers again.

"Fortunately nothing as yet about me; but that doorkeeper knows me well and surely must have spoken of my being there that night and why I came."

"This silence is what arouses my suspicion more and more, for I am sure the police sought me in my old quarters. Lucky it is I covered up my tracks so well in coming here."

"Now, to count my cash, as usual," and he took from his pocket a leather wallet in which there were a number of bank-notes of various denominations.

"Just six hundred is all I have to start anew in the world in some far-away spot from here."

"Oh! that I had kept the two fortunes I once had, one inherited the other gained by— Bah! I even fear to speak the word."

"But, I am nervous with this new shadow hanging over me— Ah!"

He uttered the word in a half cry, as a knock came at the door.

Thrusting the money and leather case into the pocket of his dressing gown he called out:

"Come in!"

The landlady's daughter appeared.

"Oh! Mr. Gibson, I hope you will excuse me, but I told mother that you intended to give up your room in a month, and to-night a dear old lady, a clergyman's wife called in to see if she could get accommodated in about a month, and may we show her your room?"

"A lady, you said?"

"Yes, sir. But, she is old, so you need not fix up any."

"Is she alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, yes, show her the room of course. You have my consent."

"Come, mother!" called the girl, and up the stairs came the landlady followed by the room-seeker.

"This is the room, ma'am," said the landlady, "and you see that it is very large, has an alcove, with closets, bath and all conveniences right handy."

"Yes, I see, I see," and the woman stepped into the room, drew near to the occupant, and, with a sudden movement, covered him with a revolver while she cried:

"Yes, and I also see the man I seek, the murderer of Melton Reeves. Hold out your hands, Gibson!"

CHAPTER X.

DICK DOOM AND HIS PRISONER.

A GROAN from Valentine Gibson, now white as death, two exclamations from the landlady and her daughter, and the stern words of the pretended woman came almost together.

The accused man was the first to speak, though he did not move as he fell back in his chair.

"Do not let him take me away, for I did not murder Melton Reeves," he gasped in almost pitiful accents.

Emboldened by his words, the landlady said: "See here, ma'am, I know this gentleman. He has not done any wrong—it is impossible ma'am; you are mistaken."

"It is not a woman; but a man—a detective in disguise," said Valentine Gibson.

"Great heavens! A detective," gasped the landlady, while her daughter boldly advanced and asked:

"Are you a man?"

"I am, and a detective, so beware not to trifle with an officer of the law."

"This man is Valentine Gibson, a murderer, and I came here to arrest him."

"If he resists I shall kill him. If he does not resist, then there will be no trouble."

"Come! hold out your hands, Gibson."

The man glanced about him like a wolf at bay. His eyes fell upon his dumb bells, Indian clubs, and last upon the foils.

For an instant it was in his mind to seize one of them, and fight for his life; but the captor in petticoats never wavered, and only pressed the revolver harder against his heart, repeating the command:

"Hold out your hands!"

Mechanically the man obeyed, and there came the click! click! as, with his left hand the detective clasped the "darbies" upon his wrists.

Then the man in disguise stepped back, lowered his revolver and said:

"I am sorry, madam, to make you the witness of such a scene; but I tracked this man to your house weeks ago, the day he came, and have kept a watch upon him ever since."

"I was seeking him then for another crime, or rather crimes committed far from here; but now I arrest him as the murderer of Mr. Melton Reeves."

"I must encroach upon your kindness to permit me to remain here with him all night, and to call me a carriage at eight sharp in the morning, after you have finished breakfast, for all of which you shall be liberally paid."

"See! I will discard these skirts, and show myself in my proper person."

As quick as is done by actors on the stage, the waist and skirts were discarded, the bonnet came off and Dick Doom was revealed.

"Wal, I declare!" cried the astonished landlady.

"Now, madam, permit me to show you my badge as an officer, that you may know there is no mistake, and then you can, with your daughter, feel perfectly safe in leaving me here with my prisoner."

He threw back his coat as he spoke, and upon his vest was a gold badge of unique and weird design.

It was a human skeleton of gold, with diamonds set in the sockets of the skull, silver manacles upon the wrists and ankles, and an arm of the same precious metal from the shoulder down, the hand grasping the bony throat in a tight grip, while upon the little finger of the hand was a ruby ring.

This remarkable image was hung by a gold chain to a shield, upon which was the following lettering, in tiny diamonds:

"DICK DOOM,

"The Death-Grip Detective."

The landlady and her daughter looked at the badge in an awed manner, the former calculating as well as she could its value, and confident that a man who could wear such a badge must be a very important personage.

So she and her daughter retired, and the prisoner was left with his captor.

Dropping into another easy-chair that was in the room, Dick Doom faced his prisoner and said:

"Well, Gibson, I have got you at last."

"I am at your mercy, it is true; but who are you?"

"Dick Doom!"

"Ah! I have heard of such a man in New Orleans."

"I am from that city, and I have been on your track just three years, Gibson."

The prisoner started and said quickly:

"Then you do not accuse me of the murder of Melton Reeves?"

"Oh, yes, and that is the charge I am going to hang you on."

"You can never do it."

"If I fail to hang you for the murder of Mr. Reeves, then I will send you to the gallows on two other charges."

The man shuddered, but said in a manner intended for indifference:

"You have made a mistake in your man."

"Have I?"

"You certainly have."

"We shall see, as soon as we have settled the fact that you killed Melton Reeves."

"It's catching before hanging."

"And you are caught."

"You have no proof."

"What is this?" and quick as a flash the detective snatched from the pocket of the man's dressing-gown the wallet and money.

In manacles as he was the prisoner could not resist, and dropped back into his chair as he beheld the revolver suddenly leveled at his face.

"Ah! the pocketbook of Melton Reeves, for here is his name upon it."

"Yes, and considerable money, too, just six hundred dollars."

"A goodly sum for a pauper, yet hardly sufficient to tempt a man to take a life on his conscience and risk the gallows; but then you have become callous of murder."

"Yes, this will hang you, Valentine Gibson, so I need not bring up honorable names in a scandal, to hang you upon other counts."

"My God! what do you mean?"

"I'll tell you," was the cool reply of Dick Doom.

CHAPTER XI.

A PAGE FROM THE PAST.

"YES, I'll tell you, that is, Valentine Gibson, refresh your memory by reading a leaf from the past."

"I will call up reminiscences which can not fail to interest you."

"I have heard it said that some ten years ago there died in old Kentucky a rich stock farmer who had an only son, a wild, wayward fellow who gambled heavily and was fast breaking his old father's heart."

"At last, maddened by some heinous act of his son the father determined to disinherit him."

"Before he could do so the farmer was taken suddenly ill and died."

"Rumors became ugly after the burial, about the son having poisoned his father, and so there were those who insisted that the body should be taken up and the truth known."

"The very night before it was done, a party of medical students, it was said, came out from Louisville and stole the body."

"Of course that ended the investigation, and without proof the youth was not arrested, and soon after sold his belongings for cash, and left for parts unknown."

"I happen to know, however, that those medical students received a letter, telling how the farmer died of a peculiar disease, and how they could get the body."

"That letter I have, and it was written by the son, which, together with the testimony of the students, who found poison in the stomach of the dead man, would hang him."

"What is all this to me?"

"Simply that you are that youth, that is all."

"It is false!"

"Well, whether false or true, this youth ran through his fortune quickly, and some years after turned up in New Orleans as a gentleman gambler, and a lucky one."

"Befriending a rich young planter one night, in fact, saving him from assassination by killing one of his assailants, he won his way to the Southerner's heart, was taken to his home, and presented to his sister, a mere girl of sixteen."

"He won her heart, too, and discovering that she was joint heir with her brother in a vast estate, he married her secretly, and paid an ally to get her brother into a duel, and by foul means rid himself of him."

"It worked to a charm for this murderer; the brother was killed, the sister got all the wealth, and soon after the girl-wife, not yet seventeen years of age, was drowned one night while boating on the river."

"She had made a will, leaving all to her murderous husband, and he, disposing of his estate, went on his travels in foreign lands, returning after half a dozen years to settle in New York."

"He became a fast man about town, belonged to several clubs, and all went well until his money was run through with, when he began to cheat at cards and was dismissed the club and cut by his friends."

"So he went on the downward scale until he got so poor, became such a vagabond, that he decided to go back to his old practices to get money—that is, to kill."

"So he visited the club where once he had been an honored member, and sent in his name to one who was a generous, noble-souled man, a cousin of his girl-wife."

"That man came out and was struck for a loan, and in pity for one who had once been his friend, the husband of his much loved cousin, he gave him aid."

"Did the vagabond murderer stop there?"

"Ah, no! he followed his benefactor from the club, crept up behind him, unheard, unseen in the blinding, howling storm, and drove a knife into his throat, thus killing him."

"He had hoped to get a large sum of money, but missing it seized his pocketbook and fled, leaving the snow to become a winding sheet for his murdered friend."

"It is false! I did not kill Melton Reeves."

"Who did?"

"I do not know."

"Then prove that you did not."

"I did not, upon my honor."

"Your honor?"

"The honor of one who murdered his father, his brother-in-law, his girl-wife."

"It is false! I did not murder them."

"I have the proof that you poisoned your father, that you entrapped your brother-in-law into the duel with your hired tool, who killed him, when you, acting as second for his adversary, did not put a bullet in his pistol, and more, that your wife was drowned by those whom you paid big money for the work."

"You have no such proof."

"I have, and more, that you forged the will leaving you her heir."

"I have proof to hang you for these crimes, Valentine Gibson, but rather than dig open old graves, reopen old wounds, drag honorable names into the courts and tarnish them with scandal, I will hang you upon evidence I have to convict you of the murder of Mr. Melton Reeves."

"What evidence have you?"

"In the first place that you had been dismissed the club, and in the second that you had become a vagabond."

"In the third place that you wrote a note to Mr. Reeves begging his aid to start life anew in a foreign land."

"Again that you went to the club, according to your letter, the doorkeeper admitted you, saw you speak to Mr. Reeves, saw him give you some money, and was aware that you noticed a large roll of bills he had."

"You waited in the alcove of the vestibule until Mr. Reeves left, followed him, and now you have his wallet and his money."

"Need I say more, Valentine Gibson?"

"Great God! I am guiltless of his murder, but circumstantial evidence will surely hang me," groaned the unhappy man.

"It surely will," was the stern response of Dick Doom, and he added:

"When I set out on the trail of a proven murderer, I surely track him to the gallows."

CHAPTER XII.

A PROMISE KEPT.

THE night passed away without sleep for either man.

The prisoner leaned back in his easy-chair, turned his back to the detective and the light, but so placed himself that he could see the latter in a mirror and watch his every movement.

The detective did not appear to have seen the mirror, but took a book and sat down to read.

At last his head drooped, his book dropped from his hand, and the prisoner saw in the glass that it was his chance.

He arose softly, was moving toward a dumb-bell, when without moving his position the detective said:

"Don't disturb yourself, Gibson, for I am not asleep, only giving you a chance to show your hand."

The prisoner uttered a suppressed oath, and shuffled back to his seat as well as he could with his manacled ankles.

Then the detective resumed his reading, and the night dragged slowly on.

With the morning the landlady brought breakfast, the detective handed her ten dollars, and said that he would take the key of the prisoner's room.

A carriage was sent for and Dick Doom said:

"See here, Gibson, to save trouble I shall disguise you, so you can reach the police chief unknown."

"Fortunately the prevailing style of ladies' dresses enables me to carry plenty of disguises, for see, here is a wig, beard and hat, and I shall have you appear as a countryman, while I go as your wife."

"It's a queer conceit, but it will win in the long run, see if it don't."

"A few changes will make me a nice old lady from New Jersey. See!"

He had disguised his prisoner, and with one hand in his coat pocket and locked there, the other was left free.

Then he said:

"Don't try to escape, for you cannot do so, and I do not intend you shall."

"Come, the carriage is here."

He locked the door, took the key and pasted over the key-hole a seal stamped with the insignia of his badge.

"I will return later, madam," he said, and the landlady escorted him to the door.

"Your arm, husband," said the pretended old lady and the grip she took of the free arm extended by the prisoner showed him he was in the hands of one who had wonderful strength as well as nerve.

"Drive to the Headquarters of the New York chief of police," said the supposed woman.

The two entered and the carriage rolled away.

In good time it drew up at Police Headquarters, and the detective said.

"Come, husband."

Again came that grip upon the arm and the two entered the quarters and the supposed woman asked to see the chief.

"Tell him we know where a noted criminal can be found," Dick Doom said as an incentive for an immediate audience.

The chief was going over the reports of his captains, a cigar between his lips, and now and then wondering if Detective Dick Doom would keep his promise.

"Show them in," he said when the detective and his prisoner were announced as:

"A She and He Hayseed from Jersey," who knew where a much wanted criminal was to be found."

"Be you the giniral?" asked Dick Doom with a courtesy.

"I am the Chief of Police of New York, madam."

"How can I serve you?"

"Waal, yer oughter be a giniral ef yer hain't, fer yer commands a hull army o' blue-coats which makes war on all disreputable in the town."

"I'm glad ter meet yer."

"As I am to meet you, madam," said the chief with a smile.

"This are my old man, Elijah Plunk, giniral, alias Valentine Gibson the murderer."

"Great God! you are Dick Doom?" cried the amazed chief.

"I am, but not to be known as such by other than yourself."

"I disguised this man to get him here in safety, for he is worth a clear thirty thousand dollars."

"And this is Valentine Gibson?"

The detective at once unmasked his prisoner, folding the wig, beard and other disguises up carefully, and stuffing them in a rear pocket of his dress.

The chief gazed into the face of the man before him.

"Yes, you are Valentine Gibson, for I recognize you now, as we have met before, sir, when you were in better luck than now."

"You look ill, sir," and the chief's manner was not unkind.

"Do you wonder that I look ill, when I have felt that I would be accused of the murder of Melton Reeves, my best friend, simply because I called on him at the club to ask him to help me begin life anew?"

"You deny your guilt then?"

"Indignantly, I do, for Reeves was the only man of my old friends who would not turn his back upon me."

"Why did you follow him from the club?"

"Because I wished to speak to him away from the eyes of the club servants."

"He walked rapidly. I had been ill and was too weak to catch up with him easily in the snow-storm."

"And then?"

"As I drew near him a man stepped out from behind a tree, there was a struggle, a fall, and then the murderer darted by me at full speed, throwing, as he did so, a leather wallet on the snow."

"He did not see me, I really believe, as he ran on."

"I picked up the pocketbook, and dreading discovery then, ran also."

"When I got home I saw that the pocketbook had been rifled of all in it, except a five hundred dollar-bill in a secret opening in the end."

"It was poor Reeves's pocketbook, and your detective there has it."

"It is in that package laid on your table, chief," said Dick Doom.

The chief opened the package and glanced at the contents.

Then he said:

"Where did you get these?"

"The pocketbook from the prisoner's dressing-gown pocket, the other things from his room, which I have locked and sealed, and am ready to conduct you to, sir, at your leisure."

"Permit me to say that you have done excellently well, far surpassed my expectations, for the proof against your prisoner is all that could be asked," said the chief in a low tone to the detective.

But the prisoner caught the words, and said:

"It is as I feared, the reason I hid, for I felt that you had your bounds of the law upon my track, and I saw that circumstantial evidence would hang me."

"You are yet to be tried, sir, so are innocent until proven guilty."

"A mere figure of speech; but answer me one question, chief."

"Well, Mr. Gibson?"

"Who is that man?"

"Candidly, I do not know."

"Or refuse to tell?"

"No, I am wholly unacquainted with him other than to call him by the name he gave me as his own, and to say that he kept his promise to me, which was to deliver you into my hands this morning, a feat which not one of the Secret Service men, urged by large rewards, could do."

"Now, Mr. Gibson, I must send you to the Tombs," and the chief sharply touched a bell upon his table.

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK DOOM'S DEFIANCE.

IN response to the bell of the chief, a policeman entered.

"Ring for the black coach, and order a guard of four officers."

"Yes, sir," and the prisoner's face blanched still whiter as soon after there came into the room the four officers.

"Secure that man properly and carry him to the Tombs, entering him as Valentine Gibson, the suspected murderer of Melton Reeves."

The officers started as they heard the name, and glanced at the prisoner.

It was in their minds about the reward, and who had been the lucky one to win it.

They glanced at the woman, but the look of serene ignorance upon the face of Dick Doom puzzled them.

"Tell the warden to allow no one to see the prisoner until further orders from me," said the chief.

The prisoner arose and faced his guards, calmly holding out his hands, while he said:

"Yes, I am Valentine Gibson, officers, and as to the reward, you are not in it a little bit."

He had already assumed an air of bravado.

"Hold not a word of conversation with the man," sternly ordered the chief, and the prisoner was led away.

"Now, Mr. Doom, permit me to congratulate you."

"Thank you, sir, and may I ask you to collect the rewards and bank them for me with the amounts already in your hands?"

"Certainly; it shall be done at once."

"There is no hurry, sir."

"Now, let me ask you how you captured him?"

"As I said, sir, I was here on a trail of my own, and Valentine Gibson was the man I was after, so I had known his whereabouts for some time, intending to take him with me South, for let me tell you, though in strict confidence, that the man can be hanged for other crimes; yet, as it would involve homes, I care not to drag out for public gaze, I will be satisfied to see him hang for the murder of Melton Reeves."

"Should he, by the contradictions of the acts of an often fickle Justice, escape the gallows as the murderer of Reeves, then I am ready to see that he still goes to it for his other deeds of guilt."

"Of course this is between ourselves, chief."

"Certainly, I shall so hold your confidence. But may I ask where Captain Lathrop's mother went yesterday after leaving me?" and the chief smiled.

Dick Doom laughed.

It was a low, merry, musical burst of laughter, and his face lighted up with strange fascination under its influence.

"I dodged your Shadowing Sharks, chief."

"But how?"

"I went to the Grand Central Hotel, left Ferret Frank locked on the outside of the ladies' entrance, skipped up to the second floor to the toilet-room, made a few quick changes in my appearance, for I always go prepared for anything that may turn up, and your three shadowers gazed serenely at me as I sat in the parlor, while one kindly told me the time so that I could set my watch."

"See here, were you ever an actor, Dick Doom?"

"All men are, sir," and women too for that matter."

"That is evasive."

"Yes, I have acted, and in some strange, thrilling tragedies," was the response in a tone full of earnestness.

"Well, Mr. Doom, let me make you a promise now?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will not again send my Shadower Sharks,

as you are pleased to call my Secret Service men, again upon your track."

"Why not, chief, for I do not mind."

"You do not?"

"No, sir."

"You think you can always throw them off the scent?"

"Oh yes, I know I can."

"You are over confident, I fear."

"It is my confidence that compels success."

"I have some fine men, Ferret Frank, Gordon the Thief-taker, Iron Touch, and as good a man as ever wore a badge among my officers is Michael Kane."

"All splendid men, and I know them all, sir."

"You do know them?"

"Oh yes."

"I never heard one of them speak of you, or any other man that I now recall."

"They may not know me as Dick Doom, sir," was the significant reply.

"Ah!"

"Or even as a detective."

"Very true."

"Now I have often given Michael Kane pointers on people, as I halted for a moment on his post at Twenty-third street and Broadway."

"He has told me that he has had some good friends, who he really could not say, that have often helped him with information that was of value."

"Perhaps I was the friends under different personalities."

"You fairly mystify me, Doom, though I deal in mysteries."

"I shall be glad to do all I can to help you, sir, as I shall remain here for some time, my personal work not being yet completed."

"How can I find you if I need you?"

"I will report daily, sir, if you will only give me a countersign, and let your man on duty know that any one giving it shall be at once admitted to your presence."

"You mean only for yourself?"

"Yes, sir; but I don't know who I may be when I come."

"I understand; but now let me ask if you will not take a place as special on my staff?"

"Thanking you, I must decline."

"I am sorry."

"I must remain free, be my own master; but if you wish to shadow me I give you full permission," and Dick Doom departed, while the chief said:

"Egad, I'll take him at his word, accept his defiance thrown down, for foxy as he is I'll unearth him," and two minutes after three detectives were on the track of "Mrs. Elijah Plunk, of New Jersey."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNFORGOTTEN FACE.

THE next morning's papers came out with the story of the capture of the murderer of Mr. Melton Reeves.

Of course the chief of police, and all connected with him, had been severely abused for their lack of enterprise and cunning, in not finding some clew to the murderer.

But now, when the story was told how the one-time friend of Mr. Reeves had been the man wanted all the while, and to prevent his escape, no suspicion had been cast upon him, and thus he had been quietly run down, the papers all praised the chief's sagacity.

Nor were the public more in the dark as to just who had captured the man than were the men of the force.

The latter felt sure that their chief had been the real captor, and would get the reward.

And learning that he had been captured on Brooklyn Heights, the police of the City of Churches invited each other to kick them whenever they met.

The officer on the beat that went by the landlady's house had a fit when he heard it, and was carted off to the hospital to get over the effects of losing thirty thousand dollars which he had, as he expressed it afterward:

"Right after being in my inside pocket, bad 'cess to meself as me father's fool."

The chief, with the Brooklyn head of the force, visited the rooms of the prisoner, and the things were overhauled.

The landlady told them that the captor had been back, looked over all and left a note for the New York chief on the table, for he told her that he would call.

He also told her under no circumstances to say anything for publication more than that a detective had called there and captured the prisoner, whom she and her daughter had regarded as an elegant gentleman who was an invalid.

The effects of the prisoner, excepting his clothing, which was sent to him, were removed to Headquarters, and as nothing could be found out regarding the affair, all kinds of ridiculous comments were daily made upon the subject.

The prisoner had sought counsel, and had refused to talk to the newspaper men, more than to say that in spite of appearances he was not guilty.

His attorney said that he had a good case, and so affairs started out for and against the prisoner.

In the minds of the club men not a doubt remained as to the guilt of the prisoner.

It was upon the principle of giving a dog a bad name and everything would be believed of him.

Melton Reeves, though a late member of the Quid Nunc Club, was the most popular man in it.

He had been foully murdered, and the club willingly paid the reward for the capture of his alleged murderer, and determined to do all they could to hang him.

Mr. Madison Harlowe the millionaire also gave a check for the reward he had offered, and all other sums were paid in, even before it was proven that Valentine Gibson was really the man who had assassinated the one who had befriended him.

The day of trial was set, the prisoner urging no delay, and so all was done that could be until the man was brought out of the Tombs to face his accusers.

The coroner's jury had not been given possession of the facts of Valentine Gibson's visit to the club, and so had brought in one of those remarkable verdicts for which such juries are so famous, namely:

"That the deceased had come to his death through a stab in the neck, with a knife, or some sharp instrument, in the hands of some person, or persons unknown" to that august body.

But they all agreed that he was dead, and that the murderer had escaped, while as the pocketbook of the victim had been taken it was supposed that robbery had been the motive of the assassin.

Upon the little party at the theater, that night of the murder, a shadow had fallen, as also upon the home of Mr. Harlowe.

Mr. and Mrs. Stanwood, and Fenton Cross, a rich young fellow who was desperately in love with Julia Harlowe, had all felt the shock with Mr. Harlowe and his daughter, of the sudden taking from their midst of one who had been a dear friend.

He had appeared so cheerful that night of their last meeting, had gone away with a pleasant good-night to all, and a few hours after was the victim of an assassin's knife.

A large number of friends, and those who had been only sympathizers, had gone to see the calm, well-remembered face as it lay in its coffin, and Julia Harlowe, leaning upon the arm of her father, had been deeply affected.

In her own heart she could not but know that Melton Reeves loved her, and yet she kept off the avowal of that love time and again, for she regarded him too highly as a friend to wish to lose him by telling him she could never return the affection he gave her.

Perhaps, under other circumstances, he might have won her; but in her memory was a face she could not forget, and she felt that already she had met the man who could win her heart.

That face had never been forgotten since the night, at the risk of his own life, he had saved her from death, and had then risked even greater danger to rescue her father.

That man of the noble, manly face was Cecil Carlyle.

And once again she had met him.

CHAPTER XV.

IN DOUBT.

SEVERAL days after the capture of Valentine Gibson, Julia Harlowe had a caller.

The name on the card was simply:

"DICK DOOM."

She asked the servant regarding the person with this very striking cognomen, and was told that he was a young gentleman, very handsome and pleasant mannered.

"He asked for me, Cowles?"

"Yes, miss."

"You are sure it was not my father that he wished to see?"

"No, miss; he asked for Miss Harlowe."

"Say that I will be down soon."

When Julia Harlowe entered the library, she

beheld a slender, graceful form, dressed in the utmost good taste, standing before a painting, regarding it with the eye of not only a lover of art but a critic.

His hat and cane were in his hands, which were clasped behind his back, and so rapt was he in admiration of the painting, he failed to hear her approach.

The work of art was her especial favorite, and for him to select it among all the other fine things about him, was a bond of sympathy at least between them, she thought.

She hesitated an instant before she said:

"Mr. Doom, I believe?"

He started, turned quickly and bowed low, while with perfect composure, he said:

"I am Dick Doom, Miss Harlowe, and I beg pardon for being so remiss in not hearing your approach."

"You are pardonable, Mr. Doom, when your admiration for my favorite painting was the cause," she said, with a smile.

"It is a gem, is it not? so exquisite in work, so perfect in coloring."

"Then you are fond of art, and a connoisseur, I see?"

"I am so wrapped up in all that is beautiful in Nature and its copy, art," and he spoke with considerable warmth.

"Be seated, Mr. Doom, and this time pardon me for being remiss."

"Thank you, Miss Harlowe, but let me tell you at once why I, a stranger, have sought you here in your home."

"I await your pleasure, sir," and Julia Harlowe was beginning to find her strange visitor a very interesting individual.

"I will at once dive in *medias res*, Miss Harlowe and state that to my name on my card should have been added the word, detective."

"Ah! then your visit has some connection with the sad death of Mr. Reeves?"

"It has, for I wish to ask your kind consideration of a few questions, if you will be so good, that I have to make of you."

"Of course not for publication, for I have been greatly annoyed by reporters, the most ir-repressible of men."

"Being a detective it is my duty to conceal, not expose, Miss Harlowe."

"True, and I will answer any questions that I can."

"You are very kind, and I thank you; but let me first tell you a secret."

"Me?"

"Yes."

"I wish to tell you that I am the one who captured the alleged murderer of Mr. Reeves."

"Indeed? but why do you say the alleged murderer, as though there was doubt about your having the right man?"

"I do not believe that a single soul except myself doubts the guilt of Valentine Gibson."

"And you do?"

"Yes, and I will tell you why, for that is the reason of my call."

"I shall be glad to hear, sir."

"Having tracked the alleged murderer down, gotten about him proofs of his guilt which it does not appear can be controverted, I have had a slight suspicion of doubt cast upon my mind that after all Valentine Gibson may not have been the murderer."

"My father, and all my friends can see no room for doubt."

"I will tell you why I doubt."

"The prisoner told me that he had followed Mr. Reeves to speak to him again, and having been ill, found some trouble in overtaking him in the storm."

"That, when near him he saw a man dart out from behind a tree and the two men had a short struggle; one fell, the other dashed by him, the alleged murderer, where he had taken shelter behind a tree, throwing the pocketbook away as he did so, and apparently not seeing him."

"He picked the pocketbook up, and fearful of being found near the man, whom he now believed to be dead, he ran with all speed from the spot."

"Do you believe him?"

"I neither believe nor disbelieve without proof, Miss Harlowe, but yesterday I overheard two ladies, waiting on the corner for a street car, talking together."

"One, I learned from her conversation, lived in a house near where the murder occurred."

"She was suffering, she told her friend, with neuralgia, and unable to sleep, stood looking out at the storm."

"Suddenly she saw a man dash by, a man wearing a cloak, as the gaslight revealed, and she wondered at his haste."

"A moment after another man sprung from behind a tree, appeared to fall, and regaining his feet ran on after the other man.

"She offered no explanation, as she could not understand why they ran as they did.

"But it set me to thinking, and so I called upon the lady and had her show me from her window, the situation of the two men, and she saw them about the time the murder was committed.

"This raised a doubt in favor of the prisoner, and I sought to find the man wearing the officer's cloak, and after considerable search discovered that a gentleman so robed, joined your party that night at the theater, and Mr. Reeves was seen to go to where he sat in the orchestra and call him away to enter your box."

In sheer amazement Julia Harlowe regarded the man before her.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CLEW.

"MR. DOOM, you are giving me considerable insight into Secret Service work, and there is far more in it than I suspected there was," said Julia Harlowe after a pause.

"In what respect, Miss Harlowe?"

"As to its possibilities, for I heard my father say that the murderer of Mr. Reeves was bearded in his den and arrested by a young detective alone.

"Now I find that brave young detective who captured the alleged murderer, I use the word alleged advisedly, as you see, I say that I find you, Mr. Doom, seeking to save from the gallows the man you brought under its shadow."

"I would not wish to see a man hanged for a murder he was innocent of, Miss Harlowe."

"Granted, and I believe you voice your real feelings, though to aid him to escape the gallows must deprive you of a very large reward."

"A reward which is intact in the bank to-day, Miss Harlowe."

"I can believe you again, sir; but now let me say that I cannot but admire the manner in which you gained a doubt of the guilt of your prisoner, and your following up the clew until you actually discovered that a gentleman wearing a cloak, on the night of the murder, joined our party in the box at the theater."

"True, cloaks are uncommon, and as a person wearing one was seen near the scene of the murder, and a gentleman wearing a cloak came home with you to supper on that same night, and Mr. Melton Reeves was killed just three blocks from here, it is a coincidence which I would like to discover a basis for."

"You reason well, sir, and I suppose would like to know who the cloaked individual was?"

"It is just what I called to ask, Miss Harlowe, as also where he lives, about the time he left your house, and if there was any quarrel that night between the gentleman of the cloak and Mr. Reeves?"

"I will begin at the last question, sir.

"There was no cause for quarrel, hence, none between the gentlemen."

"The gentlemen were friends?"

"They had never met before that night at the theater."

"Yet, Mr. Reeves invited him into your box?"

"At my request, for I recognized in the gentleman one whom I had only once before seen, one to whom both my father and I owe our lives.

"It was on a burning steamer, when he came to our rescue, and when asked for his name slipped a card into my hand and disappeared.

"In vain did my father search for our preserver, hoping in some way to repay the debt of gratitude we owed him; but that night I recognized him in an orchestra chair, sent for him to come to our box, and, as he was leaving the city early in the morning, insisted that he should return and have supper with us, which he did."

"Leaving alone?"

"Yes, and on foot, for he declined to be sent home in the carriage, or rather to his hotel."

"May I ask if he is an army officer?"

"I really do not know, sir."

"He is really almost unknown to you, then?"

"Completely, save his name."

"Will you pardon me for being seemingly intrusive?"

"Certainly."

"I dislike to pry into your affairs, Miss Harlowe, but I heard it stated that you were engaged to Mr. Reeves."

"Such was not the case, sir."

"May I ask if Mr. Reeves was of a jealous nature?"

"I do not think so, sir."

"At what hour did Mr. Reeves leave?"

"Soon after twelve."

"Before the gentleman of the cloak?"

"Yes, sir, he and Mr. Cross and Mr. and Mrs. Stanwood were driven home, Mr. Reeves being dropped at the Quid Nunc Club."

"I thank you exceedingly for your kindness, Miss Harlowe, and will ask but one question more."

"A dozen if you will."

"Do you know the hotel at which this gentleman was stopping?"

"I really do not, sir."

"Will you describe him, please?"

"A tall man with splendid physique, a darkly bronzed face which was very expressive, in fact I may say a very handsome man, his eyes being black, his hair dark-brown and his teeth perfect."

"Now for the all important question?"

"Yes."

"Will you give me his name?"

"Certainly, it is Cecil Carlyle."

Julia Harlowe saw the detective start, and she said quickly:

"You know Mr. Cecil Carlyle, then?"

"Are you sure that it is Cecil Carlyle?"

"Yes, sir, for I have his card."

"In his own handwriting, may I ask?"

"Yes, written with a pencil the first night I met him."

"Here is the card."

She went to a pretty *escritoire* in the room and took out a card from some receptacle.

Upon it was written in a bold hand a peculiar autograph, the name of Cecil Carlyle.

"I do not know Mr. Cecil Carlyle, Miss Harlowe, but the name was similar to that of a man I do know, and have bitter cause to remember, hence my surprise.

"Now let me thank you for all your kindness to me, when I had no right to expect any from you, as a stranger, and especially as a detective."

"May I ask if you are a sample of the gentlemen of the Secret Service?" asked Julia, with a smile.

"Perhaps I am an unworthy representative, Miss Harlowe."

"Then I have never known just what detectives were."

"I am glad to have met you, Mr. Doom, and I will be pleased to know how your search for proof of Mr. Gibson's innocence, and your tracking of the gentleman with the cloak turns out."

"I shall inform you, Miss Harlowe," and Dick Doom grasped her outstretched hand, for there was something about this man of mystery that commanded her respect and regard.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DETECTIVE AT HOME.

THE young detective walked slowly away from the grand home of Madison Harlowe.

He bent his steps toward Central Park, and selecting a seat sat down to muse and to watch. He was a man who was constantly on the watch for everything, anything.

"How that name of Carlyle startled me, and especially with the description she gave of the man, too."

"I must find this gentleman of the cloak, be he who he may."

"Why has she twice met him and knows nothing regarding him?"

"It would seem to me that the man either sought to shun her, or had something to hide, for she is a woman to love, to run after, not to avoid."

"What a grandly beautiful creature she is, so gentle at times, then full of fire, and with the sweet ways of a school-girl allied to the dignity of a queen."

"Yes, Miss Julia Harlowe is no ordinary woman, and if this rescuer of hers, this gentleman of the cloak, does not again seek her, then there is some reason why he dare not do so."

"Cecil Carlyle? Well, I must look over my library of Directories and see where I can find the name, and if so, if it fits the man I seek."

"Valentine Gibson may not have murdered Melton Reeves, and may escape the gallows on that charge; but he is due to die at the rope end for crimes that I know he is guilty of, and he shall never escape me, if he does cheat a New York hangman."

"Well, now for home."

With this he ceased his musings and wended his way over in the direction of Third avenue.

He came to two large apartment-houses, one on the corner of Third avenue, which was nothing more than a tenement-house, and the other on the cross street adjoining the rear of the avenue building.

He entered one of the three entrances of the

tenement-house, touched the fifth bell, and the door was opened by a spring latch.

Entering, he ascended to the fifth floor, and a pass-key admitted him into a flat of six rooms.

A pleasant-faced woman was cooking dinner, while a man sat at a table engaged in writing.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Pickett," said Dick Doom, pleasantly, and he also spoke to the man, and asked:

"Any news, Pickett?"

"No, Mr. Doom, nothing of moment."

"Well, I will be home for the balance of the day, so if you pick up any information let me know."

"Yes, Mr. Doom," the man said, politely.

Passing into the other room, the rear of which backed up against the side of the apartment-house, he stepped up to a large stove set in the fire-place, pulled one of the nickel ornaments, and out it swung on hinges, revealing a narrow, low entrance into the chimney.

This he entered, drawing the stove-door to after him, while a push opened a similar contrivance on the other side.

By this means he entered from humbly-furnished tenement quarters into a large, elegantly-furnished flat.

But he appeared to be the sole occupant of the luxurious quarters, which consisted of a parlor, the walls adorned with rare paintings, bric-a-brac, and handsome furniture and velvet *portieres*.

Then there was a library, which had many cases filled with books, a writing-desk, and appeared to be a working-room.

A bedroom came next, with marble bath near, and beyond was a dining-room, also elegantly furnished.

There was a spare bedroom in the house, a servants' room, and kitchen; but the detective seemed to be the only dweller in the pleasant quarters.

Throwing off his coat, he put on a velvet dressing-gown and gold-embroidered slippers, and stepping to his library shelves, took down a score of books of various sizes.

They were all of a kind, for they were Directories of all the principal cities in the country.

In each one he turned to the "C's" and ran his finger down the list of names commencing with that letter.

New York was cast aside, Boston followed, then Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, New Orleans, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and an exclamation broke from his lips as he said:

"Memphis claims him, for here is the name:

"Cecil Carlyle, Planter."

"I shall have to take a run down to Memphis to see if he is the gentleman of the cloak, and the man whom I also seek who bears the name of Carlyle."

"I will start to-morrow."

He copied on a card what he had found in the Memphis Directory, for there was an address given with the name, the city residence and locality of the plantation being subjoined.

That this was the home of the mysterious and really unknown detective there was no doubt.

He lived there in elegance, his meals, when at home, furnished by Mrs. Pickett, and with a chance of entering his home either by way of the tenement-house on Third avenue, or the fashionable flat upon East —th street.

His entire surroundings showed refinement, and a cultivated taste, and his library was filled with rare books, his walls with paintings and sketches.

There was a piano in the parlor, and it was open as though having been recently in use, while a violin lay upon it with a number of the latest songs and instrumental music.

There was an easel in the room upon which was an unfinished painting, and in fact every evidence that if the detective lived alone he made the most of his isolated life.

If he had friends to visit him then they surely would not come by way of the Picketts' rooms, and the closely concealed hole in the wall.

No, that means of egress and ingress was without doubt intended for the secret use of Dick Doom alone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

THE chief of police had found Dick Doom as good as his word, for he had reported each day to him.

Once he appeared as a chipper young girl, again as an old man, a third time was impersonating an old colored woman, and in each instance deceived the guard at the Headquarters as well as the chief.

Upon the morning after the home of Detective Doom is presented to the reader, or rather that

he is shown in his double quarters, a card came in to the chief of police which read:

"REVEREND CANTELL A. BIGLIE,
"All Souls Mission."

"What does he want with me?" asked the chief impatiently, for he was often annoyed with visits of ecclesiastical cranks who wished to teach him how to run the Police Department.

"He seemed most anxious to see you, sir, and hinted that he had news for you."

"Show him in!" abruptly said the chief.

A moment after the Reverend Cantell A. Biglie entered.

He had yellow hair, which was worn long and straight, combed down on each side of his face. He wore large spectacles, and his clerical suit was buttoned to the neck, where his white tie was most conspicuous.

Under one arm he carried an umbrella, under the other a leather bound book the title of which could not be seen, but from his appearance doubtless a volume of sermons which he stood ready to preach at a moment's notice.

His coat was worn slick, his pants too tight and too short, but held down by straps; but in spite of his chronic melancholy look he had the appearance of a sleek, well-fed Salvation Army captain.

"Well, sir, you wished to see me?" said the chief shortly, convinced that he had to do with a crank.

"Yes, sir, I am the Reverend Cantell A. Biglie."

"So your card said, sir, and I have no reason to doubt it."

"I am a searcher for lost souls, and—"

"Then we are in the same business, for this is Police Headquarters; but we do not wish a chaplain in this department, and I suppose that is what you came to apply for?"

"No, sir, I came to apply for leave of absence for a few days."

"You shall have it indefinitely, if my influence will do you any good."

"It's what I seek, sir; but I see that you don't exactly decipher my name, for, divided properly, it reads:

"CAN TELL A BIG LIE."

"See here, Dick Doom, you do nothing but sell me every day you report here," and the chief laughed.

"If I can deceive your keen eyes, chief, I feel that I can easily pass muster with others; but I came to ask for leave of absence."

"Reverend Can-tell a Big-lie, ha! ha! ha!" laughed the chief.

"That is a good one, for pronounced as upon your card, with the accent on the first syllable of *Can-tell* and of *Big-lie*, it would deceive any one."

"Tell me, did I ever see you as you really are, or were you in disguise when you presented yourself to me as Dick Doom?"

"Some day, chief, I will tell you; but what about the report of your detectives?"

"Upon what matter?"

"The characters who visit you here, with Dick Doom as a foundation."

"Ah! well, you elude them every time; but they did get you the other night."

"How so, sir?"

"When they got you jailed as an old colored woman, who was creating a disturbance on the street."

"Oh, no, sir, that was not me, but another party altogether."

"I was the lady who drove down to the police court the next morning and paid her fine, taking her out."

"The deuce! now, I was sure I had you there; but what about this leave?"

"I desire to run away for a few days, sir, and I'll tell you why, so that you may understand my not reporting."

"Well?"

"I have begun to think that circumstantial evidence may hang an innocent man, or, that is, one innocent of the charge against him, at least."

"Who is that?"

"Gibson, sir."

"Ha! do you mean it?"

"Yes, sir, and I'll give you my reasons for the slight doubt in my mind."

"I have not a scintilla of doubt; but I will hear what you have to say, Doom."

"You know the story told by Gibson?"

"Yes."

"In part it has been corroborated," and Dick Doom went on to tell just how he had overheard the conversation between the two ladies, the story of the man with the cloak, what had been

said by Julia Harlowe, and that he had closely questioned Officer Michael Kane, and that he did recall that, some half a square away, there were tracks in the snow to and from a tree, and these had suggested that the murderer might have had an accomplice awaiting him, and he had so reported it to the chief.

"Yes, I remember that Officer Kane did so report; but I supposed that the tracks were made either by the murdered man, or the murderer, stepping to one side for some reason."

"There is enough, chief, to give the man the benefit of a doubt."

"True, and if not proven to be the murderer your reward is not paid."

"That is of no consideration whatever, sir; but now I am going off on a hunt for the man with a cloak, for when I have a theory I follow it out for my own satisfaction."

"Well, I will be glad to give you any papers that may aid you."

"Thank you, sir, I will accept them, for I may need them."

And that night Dick Doom started for the Southwest.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TRAMP.

IN the suburbs of the city of Memphis a handsome residence stood apart from others in the neighborhood, and had about it extensive grounds, with ornamental trees, *parterres* of flowers and arbors scattered about.

The residence was not very large, but was a cozy home, and there was considerable gossip regarding the owner.

He was a bachelor of wealth, lately moved to the city, and had his house filled with every luxury heart could wish, yet in spite of its attractiveness he passed so little time there that the people of the town hardly knew him.

He kept a handsome pair of driving horses, a saddle horse, and had a couple of old servants, a negro man and his wife.

But it was said that the allurements of a plantation home he owned down the river had more attraction for him than his town residence, for four-fifths of his time was spent there, where he could hunt, fish and lead an outdoor life.

The name of the owner of this suburban home was Cecil Carlyle, for so had he been put down in the City Directory.

Seated upon the piazza of his home, just at twilight, he was watching the scene upon the river, which was in full view, and where several steamboats were visible going up or down the stream.

Thus engaged he did not see a man enter the gate, and suddenly beheld him at the very doorstep.

"Well, Mr. Carlyle, you look most comfortable here in your pretty home, most comfortable indeed, while I am starving, a very tramp."

Cecil Carlyle was a man of commanding presence, and his fine face flushed as he heard the words of the man who had coolly ascended to the piazza and seated himself upon the top stair.

He was in well-worn dress, unkempt beard and hair, and looked not unlike what he claimed to be, a tramp.

"Why, sir, do you cross my path again, breaking your every pledge by doing so?" said Cecil Carlyle sternly.

"It's the same old story, money."

"You have had every dollar that I will ever give you."

"Don't be so sure of that, Cecil."

"I am sure of it though."

"You will think better of it."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, if I don't get it, then I will make my home in Memphis and disgrace you."

"Do as you deem best, for I have not the slightest interest in your movements."

"Don't say that."

"But I do, and you can act to suit yourself."

"See here, Cecil Carlyle, I happen to know that about you, as you know, which will cause you to fly from the public eye, for your sensitive nature can never stand shame, and I am here for money."

"I want twenty thousand dollars, and that to you is nothing, for well I know how rich you are."

"Give me that sum, and I pledge you my honor—"

"Your honor!"

"Oh, you can sneer if you wish, but I am not in a sarcastic humor, but in deadly earnest, and I mean all I say, that I will have that money, and receiving it, will swear to you never to cross your path again."

"I have recorded just seven of those oaths of yours, and am out of pocket all of fifty thousand dollars by accepting your word."

"I will not do so again, and I do not care what steps you take, I will not yield."

"Beware!"

"I am not to be intimidated, so do your worst."

"You refuse to give me the money?"

"I do."

"Have you run through with your fortune?"

"I am not of your stripe."

"Have you got the money?"

Cecil Carlyle lost his patience, and said with anger:

"Yes, I have got more than the sum you ask now in this house, and not one dollar of it goes to you."

"Now, sir, go and do your worst."

The man suddenly reeled, as though about to fall, as he arose from the steps, and Cecil Carlyle asked quickly:

"Are you ill?"

"Yes, I am subject to these attacks—a glass of liquor will revive me," was the reply.

Cecil Carlyle quickly entered the house, the man almost staggering after him, and dropping down upon a lounge in the library.

"Let me rest here only a minute, for it will soon pass away."

"Liquor, please."

Cecil Carlyle placed him comfortably upon the lounge, passed on into the dining-room, and pouring out a glass of brandy from a decanter, handed it to his tramp visitor.

The man gulped it down eagerly, and said in the same faint tone:

"Thank you; that will soon pull me around, and then I will go."

"This house is too fine for me, for I am but a poor vagabond."

"Yes, I'll go now; but mark my words, you will rue your refusal to aid me."

"One minute," and Cecil Carlyle walked over to his private desk, wheeled it around from the wall and taking a key from his pocket opened a small iron door thus revealed.

From this he took a roll of bills, counted out several, and returning to the tramp said:

"Here, you are ill, and I will not send you away with no money."

"There are one thousand dollars here, and this is all you need ever expect from me."

"Take it, for, if you desire to begin life anew, there is enough to make a start on."

"Now I will send you to the tavern in my carriage."

"Oh, no, I am able to walk, for I feel better now—good-by," and the man arose from the lounge and walked slowly out into the gathering darkness.

CHAPTER XX.

CECIL CARLYLE'S GUEST.

UP and down the piazza of his home paced Cecil Carlyle, lost in deep and painful thought it would seem, for as he paced back and forth before the hall door, out of which streamed a light, his face wore a clouded and stern look.

At last a negro appeared in the doorway to announce supper, one of those respectful negro gentlemen of the olden time, so frequently seen in the best Southern families years ago, but now growing so scarce.

"Supper is ready, Massa Carlyle," said the old negro.

"All right, Uncle Toby, I will come in as soon as I see whether that carriage is going to drive in or pass by," for the sound of wheels fell upon his ears.

A moment after a carriage wheeled into the gateway and drew up at the door.

From the carriage stepped a young man who called out:

"Ho, Cecil, I know that form well."

"Burton Ellis, old friend, how glad I am to see you," and the hands of the two friends were warmly clasped in greeting.

"What lucky breeze has blown you here, Burton?"

"Well, it is a lucky one, as I get a chance to visit you, but I am on my way South, Cecil, for my health, as the doctors say I must go to Florida."

"To break the journey, for I am not as strong as I was in our old comrade days, I decided to stop and spend a day with you."

"A day, well call it a month and I'll welcome you; but here you shall remain, for I am keeping bachelor's hall and have all that you could wish to make you contented."

The carriage was dismissed, and the two friends went in to supper together, old Toby

having set another plate and made two toddies without instruction.

"You know your business, old gentleman," said Burton Ellis as he took the toddy.

While they were at supper a telegram arrived for Cecil Carlyle.

He read aloud as follows:

"Mr. Jackson, the overseer, was killed to-day by Black Tom, and you are needed at once upon the plantation.

"HANNIBAL BURKE."

"This is bad, for my overseer was a good man, and the one who is spoken of as Black Tom is one of the worst negroes on the place."

"You will go at once, for you must not let me detain you, Cecil."

"Yes, I will install you as master here to remain until I return."

"Lay abed all day and rest if you wish, go driving, or riding as you please, for I have some fine animals here, and my library is full of books."

"Will you stay?"

"Yes, with pleasure, for the weather is mild here, I find, and I have nothing to fear."

"Good! and to-night you are to occupy my room, for there has been no fire in the guest's room for several weeks, as I am not overburdened with company, in fact know next to no one in town."

"I can catch the steamer at ten, and will land at my place early in the morning, so you see I lose no time."

"I hope you will not find matters so bad as is telegraphed, Cecil."

"Well, Hannibal Burke is a very trustworthy negro, and has doubtless given me the facts as they are."

"Now, Uncle Toby, if you will pack my grip and telephone in for a hack to come after me, I'll thank you."

Both these commissions Uncle Toby filled promptly and in the grip he had the foresight to place a box of Perfectos and a bottle of fine old whisky, with a silver cup and corkscrew, for he knew his master's needs perfectly.

When the hack arrived farewells were said, and saying that he hoped to return within a very few days, Cecil Carlyle sprang in and rolled away in the darkness, no more dreaming of what lay ahead of him than did his old friend Burton Ellis see into the future the fate that he was to meet.

Cecil Carlyle reached the boat as the second bell was ringing, engaged his state-room, and as he met a reporter of the *Appeal* whom he had met before, mentioned to him incidentally the telegram he had received of a tragedy on his plantation.

The reporter thanked him for a bit of news of importance, and ran up to his office to make a column out of the few lines he had received, while Cecil Carlyle sat upon the upper deck smoking and enjoying the scene by night as the huge steamer went on her way down the river.

Had he been inclined to feeling homesick, after the departure of his friend, Burton Ellis would not have been allowed to indulge the feeling by Uncle Toby.

A large log fire was soon blazing upon the large hearth in Cecil Carlyle's room, a hot Scotch was waiting on the table, and Uncle Toby brought his wife, old Dinah, in to see their master's guest and tell him what was good to stop his cough, and what kind of a poultice to put upon his chest.

For some time did Burton Ellis enjoy a chat with the sable couple, and then bade them good-night, saying that he would have breakfast at ten o'clock on the following morning.

Then they left him, the house was closed up and the couple retired to their own quarters, an out-house in the rear, but to which a bell extended from the master's room.

It was with a feeling of perfect repose that the tired man threw himself down to rest, and watched the firelight sketch shadows that danced about the walls.

At last he sunk to sleep, to awake some time after with a start.

The fire had burned low, but there, bending over his bed, Burton Ellis beheld the form of a man, a knife clasped in his uplifted hand.

CHAPTER XXI.

A MASKED ASSASSIN.

TOWARD midnight of the evening on which Cecil Carlyle left his home, a man might have been seen skulking along the river-bank as though to avoid being seen.

He did not follow the streets, but kept out of

sight as much as possible until he came to the house of Cecil Carlyle.

He saw no one in sight, ran across the street and entered the grounds, at once seeking refuge in a small rustic summer-house.

Remaining here for some little while he made a detour of the mansion.

A light burned in one wing, and all the rest was dark.

Without was a small cottage near the mansion, and here a dim light was visible in one of the two rooms over a transom of the door.

This was the quarters of Toby and Dinah.

The man went completely around the house, then softly ascended the front steps to the piazza.

He walked with such noiseless step that he evidently had on moccasins or felt slippers.

Reaching the door he felt for the key-hole, inserted into it without any noise one of a bunch of skeleton keys and the first one unlocked the latch.

Not a creak was heard as the door swung open admitting him.

Closing the door behind him he stood looking about him.

A light burned in the library, but was turned down low, and beyond was the dining-room, which was only lighted from the library.

Into the library he went, then into the large dining-room, and at the end was the wing in which there was a large room, bath and dressing-room, the quarters of the master of the house.

In that room slept Burton Ellis, the guest of Cecil Carlyle.

The door stood ajar, admitting only a dim light from the library and through the dining-room, for the fire flickered low upon the hearth.

For some moments the midnight invader stood calmly surveying the situation.

Then he walked back into the library and slightly turned up the lamp.

It revealed a man dressed in a corduroy suit, with a pair of boots hung to a belt about his waist, and wearing felt slippers.

There was a dark lantern hanging to his belt on one side, a bunch of skeleton keys and a revolver and knife upon the other, ready for use.

The knife had a long, ugly-looking, narrow blade.

The man wore a slouch hat, and his face was completely concealed by a mask, the eye-holes of which were large, giving him plenty of opportunity for an unobstructed sight.

Going to the desk, which stood in an alcove of the room between two windows, he swung it around on a pivot, just as Cecil Carlyle had done a few hours before, and the iron door in the wall was revealed, which opened into the safe in the solid brick wall of the alcove.

The man then took his bunch of keys in hand, and inserted one in the lock.

It did not answer.

Another was tried without avail, a third and a fourth.

Then he took the bunch from his belt and began to try one after the other, when, in stooping, his revolver slipped from his belt and fell with a bang upon a cuspidor, breaking it to pieces.

Instantly he wheeled, darting into the dark dining-room, and sprung behind a *portiere* leading into the bedroom beyond.

He would be ready for the occupant if aroused, for he knew that Cecil Carlyle was a dangerous man if aroused to action.

Hardly had he gained his position, when he heard the sleeper spring from his bed, and a moment after, in the dim light, a white-robed form passed the *portiere* on the way to the library.

Awakened from a sound sleep by the crash, Burton Ellis arose and looked about him.

For an instant he did not recall his surroundings, but then all came to him like a flash, and he knew that his host was away, that he alone was in the house.

He would investigate that noise, and so he threw on his dressing-robe and moved toward the library.

There was a sudden movement of the *portiere*, a form behind him, an uplifted arm, then it came down with a heavy thud, and the knife of the assassin, but too surely aimed, had entered the heart of his victim.

The assassin was as cool as an icicle, for he caught his victim and let him quietly down upon the floor, to avoid a heavy fall.

"Great God! it is not Cecil Carlyle!" came in a suppressed tone of horror from beneath the mask.

For an instant the man seemed paralyzed with amazement and dread.

But he rallied quickly, and muttered:

"But he must be in the house."

"I will complete the work I have begun."

He walked about the mansion, now using his dark-lantern, and invaded the other rooms.

A fire burned upon the hearth of one of the guests' chambers, but no one was there.

"Who is the man I have killed: and where is Cecil Carlyle?"

"Well, I have no time to lose, so will get that money and go."

"I must not be found here."

He returned to the library again, tried his keys, and one fitted the lock.

There was a tin box full of money before him, and this he seized, and a moment after had left the mansion and was hastening down the river road toward the landing.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE MISSISSIPPI FLATBOAT.

AWAY from the steamboat landing, and apart to itself, just below the city of Memphis, a flatboat was moored against the bank.

Few such boats are seen upon the river now, in comparison with the olden times, when they were the grain, lumber and freight-carriers of the river, and the bosom of the Father of Waters was dotted with them from St. Louis to New Orleans.

This one was newly-built, loaded with a cargo for the lower river markets, and had a cabin fore and aft.

In the latter a light was visible, and within were men seated at a table playing cards.

The cabin was roomy, there were half a dozen bunks in it, a table, swinging lamp and some chairs.

The men were brawny, bearded fellows, with a look that would cause an honest man to steer clear of their companionship.

They spoke in low tones, gambled like men who played to win, and talked together as they did so.

"See here, mates, its arter twelve, and ther cap'n hain't come, so s'pose we tarns in," said one.

"No, he said the chances were ten ter one we went ter-night, and ter have ther old craft held jist by one line, so as ter git away in a second o' time."

"He are a-workin' some leetle rackit, and we better be up and ready, for he may come on the jump."

"Waal, I says wait too."

"He owns ther flat, pays us big money for ther run, and saries us well, and I don't want no better cap'n."

"No, me nuther."

"Hark! he's comin' aboard now."

The next moment a man entered the cabin.

He wore corduroys, his face had a beard of some weeks' growth, his manner was slouchy, and with the exception of the mask, he was the counterpart of the man who had entered the home of Cecil Carlyle a short while before and left behind him the dead form of Burton Ellis and a rifled safe.

"Well, lads, cut her loose, and make no fuss about it."

"Keep her inshore until we get out of sight of the town and then give her full swing in the current."

"Use your sweeps all you can, for Memphis is not a healthy place for us just now."

"Let her go!"

So said the new-comer, and in an instant the cards were put away, the winners pocketed their winnings, the losers pocketed their losses, and in a couple of minutes the lines were cast-off and the flatboat drifted away with the current.

The sweeps were used too as noiselessly as possible, and within an hour's time the flatboat had dropped the lights of Memphis out of sight.

But still it held on its way through the night, two of the men going on duty, while the other two slept, the "captain" pacing up down the deck lost in his own thoughts.

Two lights burned upon the flatboat, one forward, one aft, to mark her position to passing steamboats, and one of these passed her as she got a dozen miles away from the city, causing her to rock gently upon the waves.

As it moved down the captain went into the cabin and turned in, leaving the lamps still burning, and at sunrise the men on deck called up the relief and set to work to get breakfast for all.

The captain was called when all was ready, and ate heartily, though he had little to say.

Toward evening he ordered the boat run inshore and tied up for the night, just where there was a small creek.

But at dawn the next day, she was cast loose, and again began her downward voyage.

It was late in the afternoon when one of the men said:

"Cap'n, yonder looks like a mighty fine plantation, and I guess if we made a call thar we c'd git chickens, eggs, butter and sich, which we did'n't lay in at Memphis."

"Thar's a creek yonder, which we might run inter."

"All right, make for the creek, and I'll take a tramp ashore with my shotgun, while two of you go to the plantation and get supplies."

"Don't be stingy either, for here is plenty of money," and he handed over a twenty dollar-bill.

"Lordy, cap'n, you is flush."

"Yer must hev struck 'ile in Memphis."

"I did," was the laconic response.

The sweeps urged the flat over toward the creek, a couple of miles above a fine plantation where all appeared to be prosperity and comfort.

The mansion was of brick, large and surrounded with a piazza, while a cupola was on a tower at one wing.

Ornamental grounds, gardens, numerous large outbuildings, and a row of quarters in the back-ground gave the place a very cheerful and well-to-do air.

Into the creek the flatboat was urged, just out of view of any steamer passing on the river, and just where there was a walled-in spring, and rustic summer-house commanding a view of the Mississippi.

"This is a snug place to tie up all night," said the captain.

"I've got an hour before sunset, so will take my gun for a stroll, for there is game in these woods, I am sure."

"Lads, that is my idea of a home and comfort, and I'll bet those who live there are rich and happy."

"Don't know, cap'n, for I has seen finer houses than that have mighty grim skeletons in their closets," said one of the men who answered to the name of Parson Pete, for his comrades asserted that he was always preaching.

"Yonder comes a horseman through the timber no."

"Maybe he seen us heading in, and is a-coming to tell us ter move on, for 'tain't all flatboat men is honest, like us, and whar some ties up for a night, sich things as pigs, calves, turkeys and chicks is missing next morning."

The captain cast a glance at the coming horseman, and said quickly:

"Lads, I know that man."

"Bag him and he will be a fortune in your pockets."

"He must not see me—now."

"But capture him, and don't fail!" and nanding his gun to one of the men, the captain hastily went back on the flat, and disappeared in the cabin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE KIDNAPPERS.

THE horseman seen approaching the creek landing, where the flatboat had been tied up near the spring and rustic arbor, rode with the air of a man reared in the saddle.

He was dressed in a riding suit, top-boots, spurs and a slouch hat.

He came leisurely on, having turned from the plantation half a mile away to come to the spring.

That he saw the flatboat and men there was no doubt, but he came on at the same easy pace, and as he drew rein at the spring, called out pleasantly:

"Good afternoon, gentlemen."

"Are you going to tie up here to-night?"

"Yas, sir, we is, unless you objects," said Parson Pete.

"Oh, no, for you have good water here, and if you come over to the house I will give you anything you may need in the way of provisions, for I have plenty and to spare."

"That's spoke like a gentleman sir; but jist now we wants bigger game," and Parson Pete dropped the muzzle of the gun he held so as to cover the heart of the planter.

"Don't move, my gent, or it means you dies!"

The planter had dismounted and the rein of his bridle had been thrown over a hitching-post near.

That he was taken by surprise there was no doubt; but a glance into the faces of the four men, who had now surrounded him, showed that they were desperate fellows and not to be trifled with.

"Well, if you mean it, I am fairly caught, for I am unarmed and looked not for harm from those whom I sought to befriend."

"I guess I will learn in time that it is the way of the world."

"I has learned that same, gent, and experience are the best schoolmarin I ever know'd."

"But you is wanted, and yer will be wise ter come aboard ther flat and make no rackets."

"Well, and what is your game?"

"Ter win."

"You want ransom for me?"

"I guesses so; but we wants yer, so jist march aboard that gang-plank!"

"If I refuse?"

"Thar is enough o' us here ter tote yer."

"I have half a mind to try my strength with the four of you."

"Don't do it, for bullets is leetle things but they brings down big game, and a leetle money is better ter part with than your life."

"You reason well."

"How much do you wish?"

"I hain't ther making out o' ther bill; but cum aboard and don't tarry no longer."

"All right, I yield to the inevitable always," and the kidnapped man walked briskly aboard the flatboat, was led to the forward cabin, bound securely and left there alone.

Then the captain came out from his hiding and said:

"Lead that horse into the creek, lads, as though his rider started to swim across and was drowned."

"A tap on the head back of the ear with a bit of iron will stun him, and the water will do the balance; but he must drift among the willows there so as not to be swept away."

"This will give an idea that the rider was drowned."

"You understands your biz, cap'n, that is sart'in."

"Yes, Pete, and I play to win."

"But, come, men; let us get to work and move out of this."

The men obeyed, the horse was led into the creek near the flatboat, a blow upon the head dropped him as though shot, and his body was pulled around to the willows and the rein caught as if by accident, his body being swung around so as to attract the attention of any one visiting the spring.

Then the flatboat cast off and went floating on down the river.

By sunset it had dropped the plantation out of sight, but the captain ordered the lights lit and said:

"We'll push on to-night, for I've got an idea, men, that I'll leave you within twenty-four hours."

The captain and the four men were eating supper now.

It was just sunset and the flat was drifting at will with the stream.

"Leave us, cap'n?" said all in a breath.

"Well, it is just this way, men."

"The prisoner you have in the forward cabin is an old foe of mine, and with him out of the way, I'll get some fifteen or twenty thousand dollars he is keeping me out of."

"The truth is, men, I bought this boat in St. Louis and put the cargo on board just to carry out a certain purpose."

"That was to get hold of the man in yonder cabin."

"He lives in Memphis, and I went to his home and found he was on his plantation, for I had a talk with a hackman that drove me up town and he said he had taken the one I sought to the steamer a couple of hours before he picked me up."

"He told me where the plantation was, so I came here after going to his house and raising Cain which made me anxious to get away."

"Now, my idea was to pass the plantation, tie up and go to the house at night; but the man walked right into our hands, or rather rode into our trap."

"This boat is worth a thousand dollars, the outfit a couple of hundred more, and the cargo cost just two thousand dollars, and will bring double that in New Orleans, so we'll call the outfit five thousand."

"In case it should fall short, I have a couple of hundred in cash for each of you, and I'll give you a clean bill of sale for the whole outfit, but upon certain conditions."

"Yas, cap'n, conditions rules all trades," said Parson Pete.

"What do you say, men?"

"What is we to do, cap'n?"

"Well, jist this, and I guess my words won't shock any of you."

He paused to see the effect of his words.

"We hain't easily shocked, cap'n."

"Well, you are to put that man out of the way to-morrow night."

"Who's to do it?"

"Draw lots for the man who is to do the work, and the one it falls upon I will pay three hundred dollars more to, in cash."

"Done! if the outfit is ours, too."

"It is, the flat, cargo and all."

"It's a bargain," said Parson Pete and his expressed sentiment was unanimous.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PARSON PETE'S LOT.

IT having been agreed upon by the four flatboatmen, that they would do their captain's red work, they suggested that it should be done at once.

But for some reason the captain said he would wait until the next night.

"It will keep until then, and I wish to see it well done, for I rely upon no man's word."

"You get my money, and I wish to see the work well done."

"To-morrow night, after midnight, by keeping steadily on, we will pass Greenville, Mississippi, and you can land me there, while you keep afloat and get on your way as fast as possible."

"I can go to the hotel in Greenville and catch a boat up or down-stream as I may wish, going my way alone."

"You can go on to the city of New Orleans, sell your cargo and boat, and you will be worth fifteen hundred apiece, as you know, and that is big money."

"That is my plan, men."

"You is the cap'n, so what you says goes; but we don't want to starve ther poor devil, so I'll jist take him his meals reg'lar until he has ter slip out," said Parson Pete.

So he arose and took the prisoner a good supper, and sat watching him while he ate it.

"Well, what have you decided, my man, regarding me?" asked the prisoner.

"We'll let you know to-morrow night, cap'n."

"All right, only make me a little more comfortable here and I will not complain."

"A blanket and a pillow, with a chair will do, with the trap left open for air."

"Here is a twenty-dollar bill for your trouble."

"I thank you, cap'n," and Parson Pete slipped in to the prisoner the things he asked for.

So the night and day passed away, and the following night settled down upon the river.

The flatboat still held on, and after supper the men assembled to draw lots to see who should do the deadly work.

The captain held the lots and each man put in his hand and drew.

They were four quarters, all of different dates, and the man who got the one bearing the stamp of "1845" was to kill the prisoner.

"Just my luck," gritted Parson Pete, as he got the quarter having the fatal date.

"Yer gits ther extra three hundred, Pete," said one man, disappointed that the lot had not fallen to him.

"Waal, I s'pose I has got ter go about it, but I gives him his supper first, for if thar is anything that kin make a man feel bad is ter die on a empty stomach."

So Parson Pete got up an extra supper for the doomed man, and took it to him.

As he was starting the captain said:

"See here, Pete, do your work well, bring the body aft, and toss it into the river over the stern of the boat."

"I'll do it prime, cap'n," was Pete's answer, and he went to the forward cabin.

"Here I is, boss, with yer supper."

"You are really very kind to me, and I cannot complain of your treatment, my man."

"Waal, eat a good supper, for then I has something to tell you."

The prisoner obeyed and did eat a good supper.

"Now?"

Pete waited a minute and said:

"How much would you be willing to pay for your ransom, boss?"

"Give me an idea of your own figure?"

"Would you say ten thousand in cash?"

"That is a large sum, and besides you took me from my plantation and I had not with me over a couple hundred dollars."

"Suppose I said I would take your word for the pay?"

"That is generous, and if I promised you I would not break my word."

"I can believe that, for I has seen that you is a man from toe-nail ter top-knot."

"Thanks for your good opinion."

"Now, boss, I has orders to kill you."

"To kill me?" coolly asked the prisoner.

"I has, and I has draw'd ther lot as ther man ter do ther work."

"What does this mean?"

"It's meaning is ter git you out o' ther way, why and wherefore, t'other and whitch I knows nothing about and cares less."

"But I has agreed ter kill yer, tote yer aft and toss yer overboard, with hands and feet tied."

"Now I hain't no murderer, if I is a bad man, and my idee is ter jist let yer play 'possum, play dead, and ter tie yer hands and feet so yer kin slip 'em in a second."

"Kin yer swim?"

"Like a fish."

"Good! now I'll jist play thet game on yer and let yer go."

"I'll watch until ther flat sweeps near in-shore, and then toss yer over; but ther cap'n wants ther things yer has on yer, so yer must give them up; yer kin swim ashore from whar yer goes over and if ever I comes your way and makes myself known, then yer kin give me a lift in cash."

"See here, my man, I am not afraid to die, though of course I cling to life, and would escape such a death as you propose; but if you will do as you say, I'll give you my word of honor if you will come to me at any time in the future, I will give you five thousand dollars, and try and start you on a better road than the one you follow."

"Here are the valuables and a letter bearing my name and address in Memphis. I also spend much time on the plantation where you kidnapped me. Don't lose the address on the envelope or forget the name. Now I am at your service."

Parson Pete at once set to work to bind the prisoner's hands and feet to suit himself, so that they could be at once freed. Then he said:

"Give one long, loud cry!"

The prisoner did so, and the men grouped aft started and shuddered at the coming tragedy.

Then Pete raised the form in his arms, staggered aft with it, and with an effort tossed it over the stern into the dark waters of the river.

The flatboat swept on, while Parson Pete sat down and buried his face in his hands.

"I wanted to see that body, Pete, before you threw it overboard," said the captain sternly.

"I didn't know that, cap'n, or I'd have laid it on ther deck, though I wanted ter git rid of it soon as I c'd."

"Did you do the work thoroughly?"

"Thar's the knife, and ther hilt is red, as yer sees."

The captain took the knife and coolly examined it by the light of the lamp.

"Yes, it went to the hilt; but he is a strong man and might stand a bad wound."

"Wasn't his hands and feet tied, so he'd drown, if there was any life in him?" demanded Pete, reprovingly.

The captain glanced back over the wake of the flatboat.

All was quiet there, save the murmuring of the waters eddying along.

"Well, that is settled. It is just nine o'clock. But, did you bring me his ring, watch, chain, sleeve-buttons and pocketbook, with any papers you might find on him, as I told you to do?"

"Yas, cap'n, here they is," and he drew from his pocket some letters, a pocketbook, watch and chain, studs and sleeve-buttons and papers.

"Good! Now I'll turn in; but, wake me when you see the lights of Greenville."

And, four hours after, as the flat swept close to the wharfboat at Greenville, the captain stepped off and silently waved his hand to the men he had left, for they did not even touch at the town as they went by.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DISCOVERY.

THE night of the murder of Burton Ellis passed away with old Toby and his wife all unconscious of the scene that had been enacted in the mansion of Cecil Carlyle.

There, with a button within reach of his arm, where he lay in bed, Burton Ellis had met his death.

Old Toby came in softly, as was his wont, put wood upon the library fire, and cleaned up the hearth.

Then he went to the library and put that in order, pouring coal upon the grate fire.

Having dusted out the rooms, set the table, and gotten all ready for breakfast, he went toward the door of his master's room, to make a fresh fire for the honored guest.

He drew aside the portiere, and started back with a cry of horror.

There, just across the threshold, lay the guest.

Old Toby mustered up courage to raise him, thinking that he had fallen ill.

But he started back as he felt the icy form, and ran out to give the alarm to his wife.

It was some time before the two old negroes could get nerve enough to telephone to the police court to send some officers up to the Carlyle home.

In half an hour they came, and old Toby told his story, of his master's going, the arrival of the guest, and all that had followed.

There was nothing disturbed that the officers could discover, but there lay the dead form of Burton Ellis, with a knife-wound in his back.

Toby told how the guest had been told to take his master's room for that night, as he was an invalid, and the guest-chamber had been without a fire in it for some time.

"That means that the man was an assassin, and sought to murder Mr. Carlyle, for evidently robbery was not the cause."

"What foes had your master, old man?" asked the chief of police, who had been called to the scene.

"He was that good a man, sir, that he had not an enemy in the world," was the answer.

Then suspicions became as thick as flies, and at last it was hinted that perhaps the stranger had money.

Toby had been tempted, and so was the murderer.

But the lie was given to this by the fact that the clothes of the stranger seemed not to have been disturbed, and his watch and jewelry, with his pocketbook, containing considerable money, were under his pillow.

But both Toby and Dinah were put under arrest, and a telegram was sent to Cecil Carlyle at his plantation.

In the evening word came that the branch wire, running to a village some miles from the Carlyle plantation was down, and no word could be sent through.

So the chief of police wrote a letter, and it did not leave until the next night, for there was only a tri-weekly mail.

Days passed away, and at last came the following dispatch from the plantation!

"Was captured by river flatboatmen and held for ransom."

"Letter just received. Will start by first steamer for Memphis. CECIL CARLYLE."

The unanswered dispatches and letters had begun to make people talk, and suspicion even fell upon Cecil Carlyle for the murder of his friend.

But the captain of the steamer on which Cecil Carlyle went to his plantation, gave the lie to that rumor by saying that he had landed him at his home the next morning.

The hackman, Toby and Dinah had said that Mr. Ellis had gone out upon the piazza to bid Cecil Carlyle good-by, and so there was not a peg left to fasten guilt upon the host, because the real murderer could not be found.

But the telegram at last received relieved all anxiety, and told that Cecil Carlyle was coming home, and just as officers of the law were to be dispatched to his plantation to know the cause of his silence.

The coming of the young planter was looked forward to with the deepest interest by all, and the papers contained numbers of articles regarding him, more or less true.

One of them read as follows:

"The studied silence of Mr. Cecil Carlyle has been at last explained by a telegram from him."

"This states that he had been kidnapped by river flatboatmen and held for ransom."

"This was all, except that he stated he would take the first steamer up to Memphis."

"His coming will be looked forward to with more than interest, for there is just now the greatest interest hanging over the life of Mr. Carlyle."

"It seems that he left his guest, the night of his arrival, called by a dispatch to his plantation, signed, the Carlyle servants say, by a negro, Hannibal Burke."

"This telegram read that Black Tom, a negro, had killed the overseer."

"Mr. Carlyle went at once, left a guest in his house, and that guest was murdered a couple of hours after his host's departure."

"Then follow unanswered telegrams and letters and at last an answer stating that Mr. Carlyle has been kidnapped."

"We will be glad when he arrives to explain, if he can, all these mysterious happenings."

"Mr. Carlyle is a stranger in our midst, a gentleman in appearance and a man of wealth."

"He has studiously avoided all society, and we have, from a squib in an exchange that one, Cecil Carlyle, supposed to be the one in our midst, was left a large fortune, and spent his income in traveling about the world."

"He served in the Egyptian Army with distinction, had a staff appointment in the French Army,

during the Franco-Prussian War, was decorated and also served with the Sultan's troops against Russia."

"Tiring of being a soldier of fortune he returned to the United States and for reasons, best known to himself, selected Memphis as one of his abiding-places."

"It remains to be seen whether we are honored by our comparatively unknown citizen."

"Let us hope that he may put away the cloud that in our opinion hangs over him."

Such was the article in the columns of the *Weekly Scandalmonger*, and it was read with great eagerness and interest.

Two days after it was issued, a steamer was seen coming up the river that was known to touch at the plantation landings, and it would surely be the one which Mr. Carlyle would catch, according to his telegram.

When it ran alongside the wharf-boat, Cecil Carlyle's tall form was seen, the chief of police stepped on board, and a moment after the two were driving rapidly toward the planter's Memphis home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CLOUDS ROLL BY.

"MR. CARLYLE, I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, but I sympathize with you in all the trouble that has come upon you," said the chief of police, as the two were driving to the Carlyle home.

"Thank you, sir; it is, indeed, a wave of trouble."

"I have seen all the papers, and gleaned the facts and falsehoods from them, so that I am fairly well posted."

"May I ask what has been done with the body of my unfortunate friend, Ellis?"

"An inquest was held, sir, and the surgeon's autopsy given, after which we gave the body over to his brother, who came and took it to his home for burial."

"I found his address among his papers, so I wired there at once."

"That was right, and I have much to thank you for."

"Poor Burton was a very dear friend of mine, for we were together in Heidelberg for several years, and have always kept up a correspondence."

"Can you find no clew to the murderer?"

"None, sir, though everything has been done that we could think of."

"Put in the papers for to-morrow the offer from me, please, of a reward of five thousand dollars."

"This is generous, sir."

"I only hope it may bring good results."

"I feel sure that I was the one who was to have been killed, the man the assassin sought to strike, for I believe no robbery was committed."

"Not that I can discover, sir, with the aid of old Toby and Dinah."

"I was sorry to hear those good people were put under arrest."

"I deemed it best, sir."

"How did the assassin enter the house?"

"By pass-keys evidently, for the doors were locked, and the windows closed."

"We will look thoroughly into the matter now that I am here," said Cecil Carlyle, and just then the carriage halted before the door.

A policeman was on duty in the grounds, and another in the mansion.

It was just dark and the hall lamp had been lighted by the officer.

"I wish, chief, you would have the kindness to release my two old servants, even if you have to keep a guard on them here."

"I will go their bail, also, for they are no more guilty than I am."

"So I believe, sir, and I think it can be arranged to-morrow as you wish."

They went into the house together and Cecil Carlyle lighted the library lamp and then stood gazing about him.

Then he said:

"I will at once see if there has been any robbery."

He took a key from his pocket, turned the desk aside on its pivot, and unlocked the iron door in the alcove.

"My God! I have been robbed of my money-box, and it contained thirty thousand dollars."

"Now I know that robbery was intended; poor Ellis heard the robber and came to his death in protecting my home."

"This is awful!" and Cecil Carlyle seer^d deeply moved now for the first time.

"Who knew of the existence of that safe?" asked the chief.

"No one save the man who made the false wall in the alcove and put the safe t^e, and

he is dead, but of course Toby knew, as did Dinah, but them I will swear by, as they are as true as steel."

"This robbery puts another phase upon the murder, Mr. Carlyle."

"It does, sir; but now show me exactly your theory of the case, where the body was found and give me all the information you can."

This the chief did and then Cecil Carlyle said:

"Come, let us have a glass together, and then I will tell you my story."

They drank to each other's very good health, and then Cecil Carlyle said:

"I was called to my plantation by a telegram from a trusted negro who has charge of my house there, telling me that my overseer had been killed by a worthless negro by the name of Black Tom."

"I went at once, and discovered that the overseer had seen fit to reprove the man, and he had been attacked that night when unarmed and killed."

"The murderer had to sought escape, and hiding in the woods had not been discovered until the next morning, when the negroes themselves captured and lynched him, thus saving the courts trouble, the lawyers their fees, and the county expense."

"In some cases lynch law serves a very good purpose, Mr. Carlyle, I cannot but admit."

"Yes, but to myself now."

"Three days after my arrival I was riding over my plantation, when I saw a flatboat run into a creek upon my place."

"I rode over to the spot, and suddenly found myself covered by a shotgun, and was seized, bound, and taken on board the craft, when I was placed in a forward cabin."

"Ransom was the motive, of course, and I would have been held for a big sum, but managed to get around the man who brought me my meals, and bribed him to let me escape by slipping overboard."

"It was in the middle of the river that I began my swim, but I managed to reach the shore, went to Greenville, and from there caught a steamer home, where I found your telegrams and letters."

"I forgot to say that my horse had been killed, and the idea left by my captors that I had been drowned."

"Such the negroes believed to be the case, but fortunately I escaped, though I fear I shall be a sufferer from my long swim, as I feel really ill to-night."

The chief had the mystery cleared up, and soon after took his departure, carrying the officer in the mansion with him, though a policeman was still left on duty at the gate to keep out curious people.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DICK DOOM APPEARS UPON THE SCENE.

THE murder of Burton Ellis had ceased to be a "nine days' wonder," and the people of the town were only now and then discussing the possibilities of ever capturing the murderer.

The reward offered by Cecil Carlyle, with another by the Police Department had stimulated the detectives to do their best, and they were still busy upon the case.

But no clues had been found, and it was supposed that it would be set down in the end under the head of a "murder mystery unsolved."

A number of gentlemen had called upon Cecil Carlyle, but he had almost invariably excused himself upon the plea of indisposition, and both Toby and Dinah, who had been again installed in their old home, under bonds, confessed that the master was really ill.

"He don't act like himself since he came back, and seems to mope all the time."

"I guess what he went through with has about turned his mind, for he don't remember much about what happened before the murder."

So said old Toby, and Dinah coincided with him in his opinion, for she said:

"Yes, the master is greatly changed I can tell you, and where he was brave as a lion before, he now has me and Toby sleep in the house and keep the lights burning all night."

"He seems to forget where he put things, and Toby and me is getting very anxious about him."

At last Cecil Carlyle seemed to realize his own condition, that he was failing in health, and so he decided to run down to the plantation while.

As he did, but he stopped there only a week, and Hannibal Burke wrote Toby that the master had not acted like himself at all since he had come back.

A few days after his return to his Memphis home Cecil Carlyle informed Toby and Dinah that he was going away on a visit of some months.

"Just lock the house up and return to your quarters to live."

"Put a padlock upon the front gate and allow no one to come on the place."

"I will leave you money for all expenses, and if you need more, write me to the care of my bank here, and it will be forwarded to me."

Such were his orders, and the next night he departed on his travels.

The very next day there arrived at the Gayoso Hotel a young gentleman who registered as:

"DICK DOOM,

"New York."

He obtained a pleasant room overlooking the river, made himself comfortable, as though he intended to stay for some time, and deposited with the clerk in the office, for safe-keeping, a large roll of bank-notes.

He seemed willing to be drawn into conversation, and to seek society, and could ask more questions than an old maid.

It was the morning following his coming that he was pacing his room lost in deep thought, and was musing as follows:

"How strange it is, that just as I came here to find Mr. Cecil Carlyle, there should be a murder at his home."

"I have bought all of the papers giving accounts of the affair, and this article from the *Scandalmonger* interests me most."

"Mr. Carlyle has led a varied life, that is certain."

"I cannot purchase a picture of him, for he never had any photographs taken, it is said."

"Now, I have a tangled skein to unravel here that interests me greatly, considering that Mr. Carlyle is almost unknown here, that he is the rescuer of Miss Julia Harlowe, whose presence he seemed to shun for some reason, and upon the night when seen at the theater wore a cloak."

"These facts interest me, considering that the lady living near the scene of Melton Reeves's murder saw a man in a cloak and slouch hat running through the storm that very night, and about the time of the killing."

"I will read over all these newspaper reports, and jot down notes that I need."

"Then I'll talk to every one I can, from boot-black to chief of police, presenting my letter to the latter when I wish to find out all that he can tell me."

"I'll have a look at the Carlyle place, have a talk with the servants there, and then take a run down to the plantation, for I am on the hunt for game, and have an idea that I can find it."

So it was that Dick Doom became so friendly with people about the hotel, stopped in the shops to make a small purchase, and got the salesman's opinion, talked with the hack-drivers and bootblacks, and at last made his way up to the Carlyle mansion.

The gate was locked, but there was a rear entrance.

To this Dick Doom went, and he called Aunt Dinah.

She approached suspiciously, but he had a winning way, and won her confidence.

Then she called Uncle Toby, and after some little talk the detective was admitted.

They all went into the out-house together, and there Dick Doom sat talking for a long while.

When he left, both Toby and Dinah had a new ten-dollar gold-piece in their hands.

Mr. Doom's next move was to take the night boat down the river.

He got off the steamer at the plantation of Cecil Carlyle, and carried with him a letter to Hannibal Burke from old Toby.

He was made welcome, and Hannibal Burke showed him the house, rode over the plantation with him, and told him of two negroes who had rowed up the river in their canoe the day Mr. Carlyle was captured, and saw the flatboat in the mouth of the creek.

The two men were sent for and described the flatboat, which, contrary to most of that style of craft, was painted a lead color, and had two cabins, one fore and aft, with a weather-vane on the bow, in the form of a trotting-horse.

Armed with this piece of information, and much more, Dick Doom caught the next steamer down the river.

He stopped off at Greenville, for there Mr. Carlyle had said that he had gone after his escape from the flatboat.

He went to the hotel and had a very long talk with the landlord.

Mr. Carlyle had been there, that was cer-

tain, came just before dawn, and the landlord described his dress and appearance.

He had taken a boat bound up the river.

The next boat that came down was a fast packet, landing only at large towns, and this Dick Doom took to New Orleans.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AS UNERRING AS A BLOODHOUND.

THE steamer upon which Mr. Dick Doom took passage was making a flying trip against time, landing only at specified places on a big wager.

The result was that she went flying down the river at a twenty-miles-an-hour pace.

The Crescent City came into view at noon one day, and about the same time Dick Doom who stood upon the deck caught sight of the flatboat of leaden hue, with cabins fore and aft and a weather-vane of a trotting horse stuck on a pole forward.

There were four men on the flatboat and Dick Doom turned a glass upon their faces.

"That is my flat boat," he muttered.

"Just in time, so I am in luck."

"I'll be there to welcome the voyagers."

The steamer reached the levee at New Orleans within another hour, and taking a carriage Dick Doom drove up to Carrollton and watched for the coming flatboat.

It soon after came in sight, and as it floated down the river the detective walked along on the top of the levee.

Just before the setting of the sun the flatboat found a place to moor among a number of others of her class.

Three men at once went on shore while one remained on board.

That one was Parson Pete, and he soon had a visitor.

"My man, I wish to have a talk with you, and I'll show you that I am an officer, so I wish the truth, if you expect to save your neck."

Parson Pete turned deadly pale, and glanced anxiously at the death-grip badge of the detective.

"Yes, sir," he said, in a husky voice.

"Where is your flat from?"

"St. Louis, sir."

"When did you leave?"

The date was given.

"How long were you at Memphis?"

"Two days, sir."

"Where else did you stop?"

"Only to tie up at night, sir, and at Vicksburg for provisions."

"Who owns the flat?"

"Four of us, sir."

"Where are your papers?"

They were exhibited, the bill of sale to the four men named, of flat, fittings and cargo, for a price stated, and sold to them by C. Carlyle.

"Where is this man?"

"He left us at Greenville, sir."

"Why?"

"He sold out."

"Now let me tell you that I know that you stopped at Silver Spring Creek, on the Carlyle plantation, and that you kidnapped the planter and—"

"I'll out with the whole story, sir, if you will only promise to spare my life," cried Parson Pete.

"I'll let you go free if you tell me the whole truth."

"You shall have it, sir," said Parson Pete, eagerly, and he at once began the story of how he had been engaged by a strange captain in St. Louis, with his three companions, as a crew for the flatboat.

He told of the captain's going ashore in Memphis, their hasty departure, that he had plenty of money, too, and brought a tin box on board with him.

The stop at the plantation, the discovery of the horseman, his capture, and the compact to kill him was all told, along with how he had aided him to escape.

He showed the addressed envelope of Cecil Carlyle, told how he was dressed, described his personal appearance and ended by saying that they had never known their captain's name until after he left and that he had signed the name of the kidnapped planter to his bill of sale of the flatboat and cargo.

The whole story was taken down in short hand as Parson Pete told it, and then Dick Doom made a note, and calling a man from the shore, sent it by him to its address.

Ten minutes after, the chief of police came on board in civilian's suit, accompanied by two officers, also without uniform.

The chief's greeting of Dick Doom was most

cordial, for it will be remembered that they had met before, and the two had a long talk.

Then they all went into the cabin, and soon after the three others of the crew came on board, all gloriously drunk.

In an instant they were in irons, and perfectly sobered by the discovery that they were prisoners.

"I wish to start the flat up-river to-night, chief, in tow of the first steamer, and to engage three of your officers to go in charge, while not a word of this must leak out, nor are the prisoners to be seen, or any one allowed near them.

"I will pay all expenses."

"The Magnolia, a through boat to St. Louis, goes at twelve to-night, and will take the tow for good pay, Dick, as she is a fast, strong boat.

"I will see her captain at once, and he can drop your flat at Memphis."

"Good! and when does the packet go up to Memphis?"

"Fortunately, you can catch her, for she met with an accident at starting time, and is repairing, so she will not leave for a couple of hours yet."

"Then I return in her, chief, and will ask you to see my boat started all right with the officers and prisoners."

"I'll do anything to help you, Dick," was the reply, and the two parted, the chief to see about getting the Magnolia to tow the flat up to Memphis, and the detective to catch the packet for that city.

He reached the steamer just in time, and was soon on his way back to the place he had left, confident that he could unravel the tangle of mystery about Cecil Carlyle.

CHAPTER XXIX.

UNTANGLED.

AFTER a rapid run up the river, Dick Doom arrived in Memphis, and put in an appearance at the Gayoso Hotel just as the proprietor was thinking of advertising him as having been murdered.

He looked over more mail that had arrived for him, glanced at the papers to see if there was anything new in the Carlyle case, and then called upon the Memphis chief of police, and presented his letter from the New York chief.

He was most cordially received, and the two men were closeted together for an hour.

Leaving the Police Headquarters, Dick Doom had gone out to call upon old Toby and Dinah.

They remembered his former generosity and received him well, and were delighted with some presents he had brought them.

It was not very hard to persuade them to let him look over the house, and he asked them all about the murder of Burton Ellis over again, and they described everything.

Stopping in front of a framed photograph in Cecil Carlyle's bedroom, he asked:

"Whose picture is this?"

"A lady Massa Cecil saved from being kilt, sir."

"He said he saw the photograph in New York, and bought it."

"It is the photograph of a lady I know, Miss Julia Harlowe," said the detective.

After a thorough investigation of the house he took his leave, but not until Toby said they had a letter from Mr. Carlyle stating that he had taken rooms in New York to remain some time.

Dick Doom also carried away with him a photograph of Cecil Carlyle, lately taken in New York, and which was in an album.

This he had to take without being seen by Toby or Dinah, and he did it as deftly as a pick-pocket.

That night Dick Doom started for New York, leaving the chief of police at Memphis to receive the flatboat and prisoners upon arrival.

He reached New York about dark, and an hour after drove up to a flat-house in a fashionable quarter of the city, rung the bell and was invited into the parlor to await the coming of the owner of the apartments.

He had not long to wait, when in came a tall, handsome man in full evening dress, who said impatiently:

"I do not recognize you by your card, sir, so what is your business with me?"

"Do you refuse to recognize an old friend? Come! let me grasp your hands, Carlyle," and in an instant there came the quick click, click, of steel, and Carlyle was in manacles.

He started back, but a revolver covered him, and he heard the words:

"Come, Clyde Carlyle. You are my prisoner."

"You have played a very bold game, but you are trapped; and, my word for it, you will hang for the murder of your twin brother, Cecil, if he be dead, and if not, for killing and robbing Melton Reeves, for whose murder a man is now under shadow of the gallows.

"Come, you go with me, and if they do not hang you here in New York, then I will take you back to Memphis to swing for the murder of Burton Ellis.

"You are as clever a scamp as I know, and I have long sought you for having killed Gordon Grayhurst in a duel where your pistol alone was loaded with ball.

"You had as a second the very man, Valentine Gibson, who is now accused of a murder you committed here in New York that night of storm.

"Your striking resemblance to your twin brother, your voice, size, manners, caused you to feel that you could kill him and then impersonate him.

"Your parents allowed him to be adopted in infancy by wealthy relations of the same name, and thus you became sole heir to your father's estate.

"You went to the bad, your brother lived a life of honor.

"You I have long sought as a connecting link in the crimes of Valentine Gibson, and now I have you both.

"You have played a wicked game to add to your ill-gotten riches by marrying Miss Harlowe, whom your brother rescued with her father from death.

"But to-night I will lay before her the story of your black life.

"Come, I want you."

The man was utterly crushed and followed as a child might have done.

Dick Doom called the servants, dismissed them, and locking the apartments put the keys in his pocket.

Then the two, the detective and his prisoner, descended to the carriage in waiting and were driven to Police Headquarters.

The chief had received a telegram to be there, and when he had warmly shaken hands with Dick Doom he heard the whole story of Clyde Carlyle's crimes.

"Then, after all, in spite of the evidence, Valentine Gibson did not kill Mr. Reeves?"

"No, but he has done even blacker deeds, and I have the papers for taking him to New Orleans, while this is the gentleman with the cloak who killed Reeves, got, as he believed, all the money from his purse and then threw it away as he ran.

"With that money he laid the foundation to kill his brother, impersonate him and wed Miss Harlowe.

"I have followed him step by step through all of his acts, and the next thing to do is to find Cecil Carlyle for I cannot believe he was drowned in the Mississippi that night when set free by Parson Pete."

As Dick Doom spoke a telegram was brought in.

The chief glanced at it and handed it to the detective with the remark:

"This is for you, Dick."

It read:

"Cecil Carlyle turned up to night at home. Was picked up at night in the Mississippi nearly exhausted, by a flatboat's crew.

"Was taken ill and nursed by them on the voyage down.

"At length, after long and severe fever, recovered and returned home.

"He tells me that the man you are after is Clyde Carlyle, his twin brother, and whom he has befriended again and again.

"Hold your man for requisition. Answer.

"CHIEF POLICE, Memphis."

Dick Doom did answer as follows:

"Have my man safe. Will have to stand trial here for murder of Melton Reeves. If he escapes with his neck before a New York jury, will give a Memphis jury a chance to hang him.

"Will stop over on way South with a prisoner wanted in New Orleans.

"DICK DOOM."

Having sent this dispatch Dick Doom entered a carriage and was driven rapidly to the Harlowe Mansion, where Julia was waiting for the coming of Carlyle to take her to the opera.

She greeted the detective with surprise, and before her father she heard the story of Clyde Carlyle's infamy.

That night at twelve, Dick Doom, as Clyde Carlyle had broken down and made full confession, took Valentine Gibson from the Tombs, on a requisition of the Governor of Louisiana, and started South with him.

The flatboat had arrived when he returned, and the crew were held to tell their story, and then appear against Clyde Carlyle in New York, after which Parson Pete was to be set free, according to contract.

CHAPTER XXX.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN he reached Memphis, the first duty of Dick Doom was to place his prisoner in jail to await his pleasure, and then go and see Cecil Carlyle.

He found him looking thin and pale after his severe illness, but he saw at a glance the striking resemblance to his wicked brother when the other's beard was shaved off and hair cut in the same style that Cecil wore his.

The two went over the whole story together, and then Mr. Carlyle said:

"I was told by Clyde years ago that I was not his twin brother, but his half-brother, and that my mother had been deserted by my father, who afterward married his mother, and that is why they were willing to let me be adopted by others.

"This I have since discovered was false, for we are twin brothers, only the thought of my shame has made me dread its being found out.

"Now, I can say nothing to stay the hand of justice that must fall upon my erring, unfortunate brother."

And he did not, though Clyde Carlyle never came to trial, as one morning he was found dead in his cell, having taken his own life.

Valentine Gibson was being taken to New Orleans by Dick Doom when the steamer they were passengers on caught fire, and though the detective escaped, he being in another part of the boat at the time, the prisoner was not rescued, and it was said had perished in the flames, a fitting end for a life so evil as was his.

Cecil Carlyle went North some time after his brother's death and met Julia Harlowe, and their acquaintance, so strangely begun, ended in the maiden becoming the wife of her rescuer.

As for Dick Doom, he returned to his home near New Orleans, and said that with the death of Clyde Carlyle by his own hand, and Valentine Gibson by fire, he must feel that he had had his revenge, for those most dear to him, Gordon Grayhurst and his sister, Marion Grayhurst had most surely been avenged, and that had been the aim of his detective work as a mysterious unknown.

THE END.

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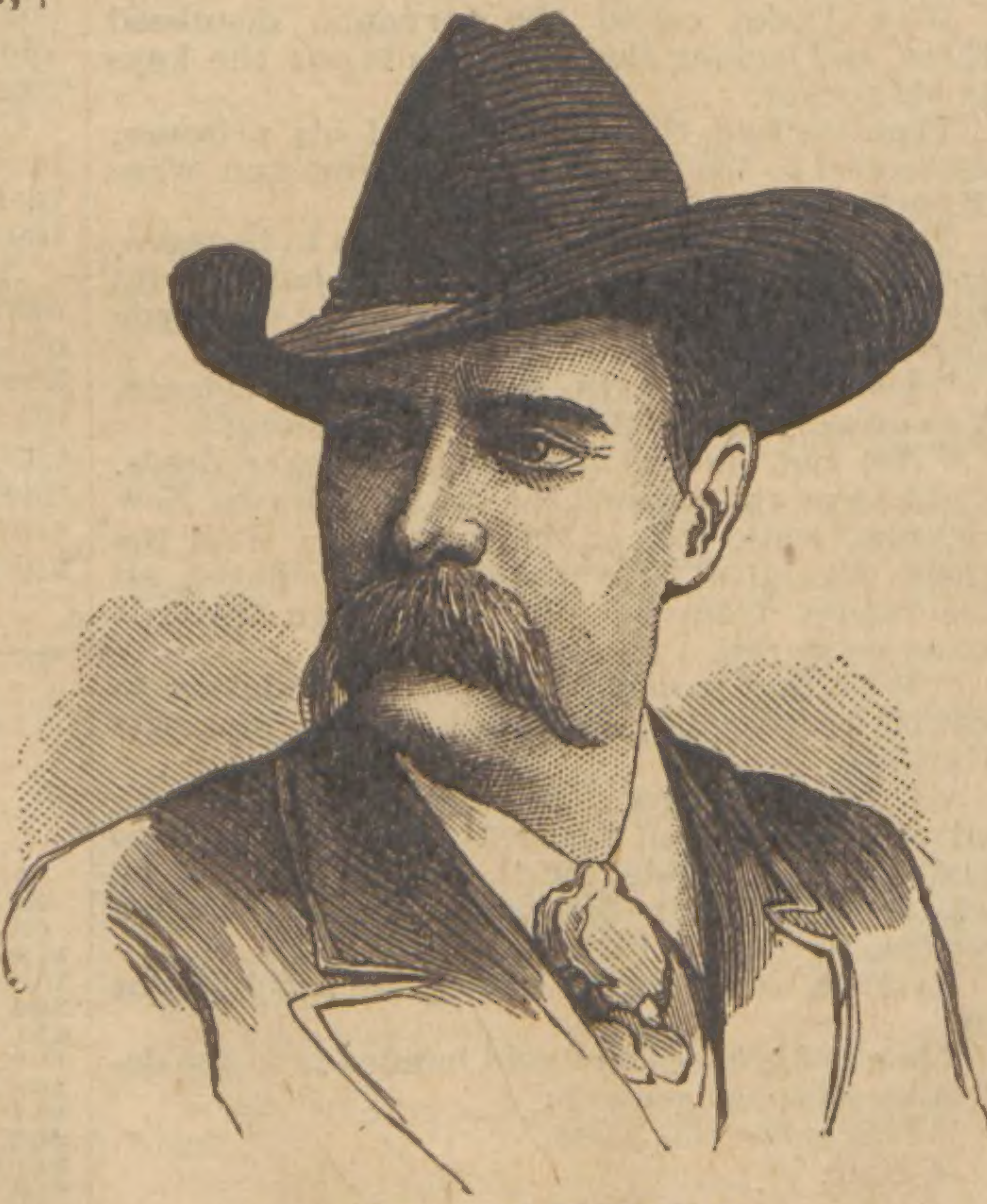
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